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ABSTRACT

Most educators recognize the importance of home-school connections, especially for the development of engaged and enthusiastic readers. This collection of 33 articles published in "The Reading Teacher" from 1993 to 1999 presents the "best of the best" classroom-tested ideas and approaches for increasing student motivation for reading and developing and maintaining home involvement in reading. Articles in the collection are: "Host a Poetry Spectacular!" (Margaret Hoagland); "Why Was the Elephant Late in Getting on the Ark?" (Francis E. Kazemek); "Riddles: Fun with Language across the Curriculum" (Rita Buchoff); "Motivating Children to Read More Nonfiction" (Mariam Jean Dreher); "Book Commercials" (Tammy N. Adams and Edward J. Dwyer); "Jackdaws Improve Reading Attitudes" (Joan Gibbs); "Kindergartners 'Choose' to Read" (Alayna M. Henderson); "Cooperative Group Rotation" (Betty Mermelstein); "'I Know that Book's Here Somewhere!': How to Organize Your Classroom Library" (Hollie Brooks); "Creating a Culturally Sensitive Classroom Library" (Danny Brassell); "Helping Children Use the Classroom Library" (Pat Prill); "Workshop Pedagogy--From Concrete to Abstract" (Arne Trageton); "Language Master Redux" (Arne E. Sippola); "Flashlight Reading: Making the Reading Process Concrete" (Larry W. Rennick and Karen M. Williams); "Reading Millionaires--It Works!" (Nancy L. Baumann); "Active Reading through Fanny Books" (Jane Brown and Slenda Haynes); "'Hello, Mrs. Willman, It's Me!' Keep Kids Reading Over the Summer by Using Voice Mail" (Ann Teresa Willman); "Books and Buddies: Peers Tutoring Peers" (Elizabeth Kreuger and Brenda Braun); "'I'm Here to Help--What Do You Want Me To Do?': A Primer for Literacy Tutors" (Carol J. Hopkins); "Reading Buddies: A First-Grade Intervention Program" (Carol Caserta-Henry); "Parents, Buddy Journals, and Reader Response" (Pamela Klobukowski); "Reading Coaches: An Alternative to Reading Tutors" (Barbara A. Wasik); "Even Though We Have Never Met, I Feel I Know You: Using a Parent Journal to Enhance Home-School Communication" (Ellen M. Finnegan); "Summer Reading Pals" (Beverly Jean

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Borduin and Elizabeth Durie Cooper); "Classbooks: Linking the Classroom to the Home" (Laura Lee Scott); "Children's Books to Develop Phonemic Awareness" (Michael F. Opitz); "Family and Community Involvement: The Bedrock of Reading Success" (Robert B. Cooter, Jr., Earlene Mills-House, Peggy Marrin, Barbara A. Mathews, Sylvia Campbell and Tina Baker); "Breaking the Parental Barrier" (Andrea L. Burkhart); "Motivating Children's At-Home Reading with Book Swaps" (John Michael Sawyer); "A Celebration of Reading: How Our School Read for One Million Minutes" (Sherrell Shanahan, Judy Wojciechowski and Gina Rubik); "Identifying and Supporting Low-Literate Parents" (Susan K. Bohler; Karen L. Eichenlaub; Sandra D. Lineken; Debroah A. Wallis); "Latinos/as and Families: Books to Enhance Reading Togetherness" (Isabel Schon); and "Can We Read You Our Story? The Tale of a School-Public Library Partnership" (Marianne C. Saccardi). Appendixes contain an annotated list of International Reading Association parent booklets and brochures; and information on the annual "Choices" booklets, the America Reads Challenge, Book Adventures (a free online program to motivate students to reading success), and television series for beginning readers. Individual papers contain references. (NKA)

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Motivating Recreational Reading and Promoting Home-School Connections

Strategies From *The Reading Teacher*

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Introduction

Mark Twain once said, "Those who don't read good books have no advantage over those who can't." This statement cuts to the heart of an important and often misunderstood or ignored goal of any reading program—reading motivation. Putting Twain's words into a more current context we might ask, What good is it to teach children to read if at the end of the learning experience they no longer have any desire to read? Clearly motivation to read must be an essential goal in reading instruction programs for the 21st century.

But, research tells us that we are fighting an uphill battle. Research has confirmed that as children progress through the elementary grades, their desire to read declines (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The periodic National Assessment of Educational Progress studies repeatedly report to us that as children move from the primary grades to high school they are less and less inclined to read for pleasure. Indeed, research among fifth graders indicates that although reading achievement is highly correlated with the amount of time spent out of school in reading, most fifth graders do very little reading beyond the school day (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988).

Yet, it is precisely outside of school, in the home, that students have the greatest opportunities for learning to read. Time spent at home is the greatest single reservoir of time that can be devoted to reading. Most educators readily recognize the importance of home-school connections, especially for the development of engaged and enthusiastic readers. A recent large-scale international study of reading found that home-school connections was the single most powerful predictor of reading achievement among several hundred thousand children worldwide (Postlethwaite & Ross, 1992).

However, despite the recognition that home involvement is so important for reading development and for the development of lifelong readers, many teachers and schools shy away from all but the most basic forms of home-school connections involving children's literacy learning. Perhaps they have not had success in trying to involve parents in the past. Perhaps they do not feel adequately trained to work with parents so closely. Regardless of the reason for not getting involved, the fact is that home-school connections in children's literacy are so powerful that we can no longer afford not to plan, implement, and support such programs. When the home is involved, both reading achievement and children's love for reading increase.

Moreover, when successful home-school connections are made and main-

tained, parents and teachers come to a greater appreciation and understanding of the role of the other.

With this volume, we share with you classroom-tested ideas and approaches for increasing student motivation for reading and for developing and maintaining home involvement in reading. The articles have been drawn primarily from the Teaching Reading department of *The Reading Teacher* during our 6-year tenure as editors; this section of the journal is devoted to practical reading instruction strategies for classrooms, reading clinics, and homes. The ideas and support materials included in this book are examples of authentic and thoughtful classroom practice. The contributors to this volume subscribe to a broad understanding of the importance of literacy learning: That literacy is central to all learning and that literacy is learned through the work of dedicated and caring teachers at every grade level. The purpose of this book, then, is to present teacher-tested ideas, resources, and activities to make literacy learning more effective, engaging, and motivating for students and to make home involvement a viable and integral extension of school-based reading.

The articles in this volume were submitted by teachers from around the world as examples of best and innovative practice in their own classrooms. During our tenure, we received thousands of articles of this type. Only a select few of these articles were actually chosen for publication in *The Reading Teacher*. Each article went through a review process that consisted of at least three separate readings and rankings. Only those that were given the highest ratings were actually published. For this present volume, we examined again those articles that appeared in *RT*. Again we read and rated them, primarily for clarity, purpose, adherence to a particular theme, ease of implementation, and adaptability in a variety of classroom and other educational settings. Only those articles that met these high standards and criteria were chosen for this volume. So, with this volume, you are reading the very best of the best of practical motivation strategies and home-school partnership ideas from *The Reading Teacher*.

The strategies offered in this volume may be the starting point for making reading motivation and home involvement an integral part of classroom reading program, or they may offer ways to enrich already existing initiatives in reading motivation and home involvement. We challenge you, as you read this book, to put together the instructional ideas you find most appropriate for your own situation into a total reading program that will work for you and your students in developing proficient lifelong readers.

We have enjoyed our collaboration with the authors of these articles, who are practitioners and experts, and we have come to appreciate the tireless work of dedicated and selfless reading teachers around the world. We hope that you, teachers and teacher educators, will find the ideas and resources in this book helpful, supportive, and energizing as we all work toward a fully literate global society.

TR, NP, JH, BM,
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Host a poetry spectacular!

Margaret Hoagland

VOLUME 49, NUMBER 4, DECEMBER 1995/JANUARY 1996

This year, why not make poetry an exciting happening for the whole school? Once you have hosted a "Poetry Spectacular" and have witnessed the enthusiasm it evokes in students, teachers, and parents, you'll want to make it a permanent fixture in your school's activities.

The program may be hosted by one classroom or several. Last year I experimented with one Grade 6 classroom and, after having great success, I will be extending it to all sixth-grade classrooms.

Getting started

First, flood your classroom with a large variety of poetry books. Your school librarian can help you with this. Also, encourage students and parents to bring in books from home.

Talk about the different types of poetry and ask students about their favorites. Read a variety of poems to the class including narratives, ballads, haikus, and both humorous and serious pieces. Discuss the kinds of images these poems conjure up in students' minds.

Then have students in your room form committees and seek out different types of poems previously mentioned. Selections should be conducive to acting out, both verbally and physically. As individual students pore over the wide assortment of poetry books, they should jot down titles and pages of those poems suitable for presentation to a large audience.

Next, have committee members read their selections. Each committee makes recommendations about how certain poems may be presented and the type of props that may enhance the recitation of the poems.

After each committee's presentation, students assign themselves to particular poems that they enjoyed. Several students may team up for the same poem and individuals may sign up for more than one poem.

Once all students have found their favorite poems, the "wish list" begins. Each child carefully copies the poem and lists items or "props" he/she may need for the full "effect." Children post these wish lists around the room so that other students can initial any items they may be able to supply or help make. A group of students

working on the same poem may develop the list together.

A great deal of practicing among peers goes on as most poems are committed to memory. It's wonderful to see the daily improvement in voice expression and actions.

Longer poems, such as "Casey at the Bat," may be read smoothly and expressively by a narrator, while baseball players reenact that infamous day in Mudville when Mighty Casey struck out!

List of props

The big day

We hold our "Poetry Spectacular" in the gym, and use the stage, steps, and floor for our performance. Decorations are kept to a minimum so that the focus is on the speakers and their props.

We send invitations to all school members, and we encourage parents to attend. The student audience sits on the gym floor, leaving aisles on both sides and in the center of the gym. Parents and other guests sit on the bleachers. This way our young performers can really get close to the audience as they move freely about, dramatizing the poems.

Live action really enhances the poetry, so it's not surprising at all to have one student ride a bicycle from the back of the room to the front, or someone else to stand in the middle of the gym pitching to a batter.

Students are very adept at encouraging audience participation in the program. A poem such as "Alligator Pie" by Dennis Lee lends itself to instant involvement once giant cue cards with repetitive lines are presented and students are mingling with the audience.

You may want to take this poetry fun a bit further by allowing students to present and act out their own poetry as well. The announcer boldly proclaims, "And now, we have some genuine poets amongst us today!" as individuals or teams step forward and make their own poems come to life.

This delightful presentation is guaranteed to captivate viewers of all ages. Students preparing for such an event not only gain a deeper appreciation of poetry, but also boost their self-esteem in presenting a dynamic program that requires cooperation, collaboration, and a host of integrated skills including writing, reading, listening, and speaking. Students truly have ownership of their "Poetry Spectacular!"

Why was the elephant late in getting on the ark? Elephant riddles and other jokes in the classroom

Francis E. Kazemek

VOLUME 52, NUMBER 8, MAY 1999

How do you know when an elephant has been in your bathtub? Linsey (all children's names are pseudonyms), a first grader, wrote, "The way to no is when the elephant stretch[es] the tub." Her classmates had other ideas. Andy wrote, "The elephant spill pens [peanuts] all ovr the for [floor]"; his answer to the riddle was accompanied by a drawing that showed an elephant in a bathtub exuberantly throwing peanuts on the floor. Jessie drew a picture of an elephant standing outside a door; below the elephant were three large footprints. He wrote, "Bea [because] fot. [foot] print fo [of] kos [course]."

I have been reading and writing riddles and jokes with primary-grade students over the years and have encouraged teachers to do the same. Elephant riddles have been especially popular. Together the children, teachers, and I have been playing with language in order to learn more about it. In this article I want to describe what we learned in our language play. I first discuss why elephant riddles are viable catalysts for wordplay and language development. Then I explore some relationships between children's thinking and elephant riddles. Lastly, I offer some suggestions for incorporating them as a regular part of the classroom flow.

"How do you no that a elaphint has been in the cubbard?"

Elephant riddles and their "various offspring...are 'trick' riddles requiring a special knowledge to answer, reminiscent of shaggy dog stories in that many of them are based on the psychological non sequitur or absurdity of situation" that marks the shaggy dog story (Cray & Herzog, 1967, p. 27). For example, Why are elephants gray? So

they can't be mistaken for raspberries. These riddles have been around for a long time and regularly make a comeback among children in various guises, for example, bear riddles: Why do bears wear running shoes? For jogging, of course.

Elephant and other kinds of riddles are viable oral and written classroom texts because they are so much fun for both children and teachers. They allow children and adults to laugh together, to try and "stump" one another, and to engage in the kind of banter and joking that is omnipresent outside the classroom. Jokes and riddles are a common type of "poetic discourse," that is, language that focuses on language itself, that most people use at home, on the job, and elsewhere.

Elephant riddles also foster an integrated language arts classroom. They are brief, but whole, texts that are especially suited for novice readers. Likewise, they offer a general pattern that children can follow as they compose their own. Moreover, the telling of and listening to elephant and other riddles help children develop their oral language abilities in a purposeful manner. This natural integration of language modes is complemented by visual interpretation and play as children produce illustrations to accompany their riddles.

We want children from their earliest years to understand and love language for its flexibility, its power to help us literally and figuratively to dance and sing, and its ability to free us from the constraints of the immediate context. Elephant riddles especially allow children to focus on the nonliteral, imaginative, and even nonsensical. They help children become familiar and comfortable with the poetic resources and uses of language.

Jokes and riddles of all kinds are ubiquitous in the world outside the classroom, but we seldom find them as an *integral* part of the curriculum. In addition to being a kind of poetic discourse, they also are a functional kind of discourse that helps us get along with others, relieve tension, and pass the time. By incorporating elephant riddles into the classroom, teachers can help children understand and play with the whole universe of discourse and not simply a part (Britton, 1982).

Lastly, elephant riddles give children a great deal of cognitive, linguistic, and imaginative space in which to play. By their very nature, elephant riddles don't make logical sense. When one asks, "Why do elephants live in trees?" any response is just as correct as the common one: "Where else can they lay their eggs?" Elephant riddles encourage imaginative and idiosyncratic responses. Concomitantly, within this safe space children can explore "dangerous" English, which typically is not recognized or welcomed in the classroom but assuredly used by children when adults are not around. For example, when a third grader asked his teacher, "Why did the elephant take toilet paper to the party?" and she said she didn't know, he timidly told her, "Because he's a party pooper." The teacher laughed and shared the joke with the rest of the class. By doing so she legitimized the boy's joke and helped the children make a connection between their language use in and out of the classroom.

"Why do elearients wear bloue Brkeas [Brooks gym shoes]?"

During one school year, a first-grade teacher and I collected many samples of her students' oral and written riddles and jokes, both elephant riddles and others. We also discussed the riddles and jokes with them. For most of them, a joke was something that they expected to be funny; likewise, a riddle was a question the answer to which was supposed to be funny. In other words, by simply knowing that they were engaging in a particular kind of discourse the children laughed—whether or not the joke or riddle was funny or whether they understood it or not.

The children's definitions reflected the cognitive strategies that Geller (1985) found children using when confronted with a riddle. She says that children typically attempt to find some fit between the riddle question and solution and incorporate nonsense whenever understanding is missing. These particular first graders similarly attempted to find various fits, whether logical or illogical, literal or figurative, and then laughed over what they found because they knew that one laughs at riddles and jokes.

Literal-level elephant riddles

It was easy to make sense of many of the children's written elephant riddles once we considered their definition of riddles and jokes. They produced a large number that, to most adults at least, were not funny. I call these "literal level" because they reflect the children's attempts to find some fit between a riddle question and solution by providing a literal, actually nonriddle-like, response. For example, we find: "Wie doe ealafs got beg ers [ears]?" "So theae ean hare[hear]." "Way does the elephants go to the market?" "He went to go to get hes pinos [peanuts]." "Why do elephants wear didpers?" "Because its a baby." "Wy did the tigre bit [bite] the elefinte?" "Bekas the elefinte spaingt [spanked] him."

First graders' logic

There were various elephant riddles that were carefully constructed with de-

For further exploration

Here are some of the joke and riddle books I have found to be useful:

Blake, Robert. (1964). *101 elephant riddles*. New York: Scholastic.

Johnstone, Michael. (1987). *1,000 crazy riddles for kids*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Schwartz, Alvin. (1983). *Unriddling: All sorts of riddles to puzzle your guessery*. New York: Harper & Row.

Stine, Jovial Bob. (1986). *101 silly monster riddles*. New York: Scholastic.

tailed drawings and letters. It was obvious to us that the children had specific ideas in mind when they composed them. When taken out of their immediate context, however, and looked at from an adult perspective, these riddles were difficult to interpret.

Some of these riddles allowed us to infer what the students were getting at, for example, "Wi dednt [didn't] the elafnt eros the stret[?]" "Becos he dint [didn't] have the gas to." However, we had a more difficult time interpreting such things as, "y did the elofont cos the rowd[?]" "becos it had snifls [sniffles]." Similarly, we saw the visual and physical image the student was playing with in "Wi do elofont have loug [long] trompits[?]" "Becove tha are a brij [bridge]." But "Y do elephant drek [drink] pop[?]" "To lus [lose] theer trunk" was beyond us.

The important point in these first-grade-logic riddles is that the children were attempting to engage in rather sophisticated wordplay. They may appear to the casual observer to be little more than nonsense. The careful drawings and accompanying riddles were much more than that, however. They were clear indications of cognitive and linguistic development to the children's discerning teacher.

What's the difference between elephants and boiled potatoes?

How can teachers foster an appreciation among their students (and themselves) of elephant riddles and other kinds of language play? The first thing they need to do is to provide both time and space in the classroom for joking. Children need to know that the teacher values this kind of language use and is willing to devote at least a small part of the day to do it. Such joking might occur during reading/language arts, within the context of a content lesson (for example, elephant and other animal riddles during a science lesson), during the transition time between movement to lunch, recess, and the library, or simply during a spontaneous period of 15 or 20 minutes that is set aside to break up the regular routine. Telling children an elephant riddle and allowing them to tell a couple at the start of the day during roll or lunch count are good ways to set the tone for the rest of the day's activities.

Teachers need to have plenty of riddle and joke books available in the classroom. They can read selections to their students at various times, for example, during storytime or after lunch. They can have the students read riddles along with them (on photocopied sheets) or have them read the riddles in small groups or as partner teams. There are a great number of joke and riddle books available, many of which contain elephant riddles. These books come and go out of print in relatively short periods of time. Thus, teachers should browse bookstores and publishers' catalogs of paperback books. I've included a list of some books that I have found to be funny and useful in the classroom.

Children can use oral and written elephant riddles as models and catalysts for telling and writing their own. They can reflect back on a joke by simply retelling it in an oral or written manner, using a language experience approach (LEA) if nec-

essary. They can orally or in writing modify a joke they have heard or read; elephant riddles allow for almost unlimited modifications. Lastly, they can create new riddles using those they have heard or read as springboards for the imagination.

Children as a class can compose, collect, and publish class riddle and joke books that can then be shared with other students, teachers, and parents. One third-grade class wrote a book entitled *Elephant Jokes*. Each student contributed a page of riddles and illustrations. The contributions varied according to the students' varying abilities: Some were quite new, complex, and funny while others were slight twists on standard riddles the children had heard or read. The important point is that all of the children were able to participate, and all of the children were successful in playing around with language. The contributions ranged from "What is brown and wrinkled? A California elephant" (with a drawing of a hip, sunglass-wearing elephant sunbathing on the beach) to "What do a whale and an elephant have in common? One swims, and the other sinks."

The first-grade class I mentioned used elephant riddles as a springboard for many other kinds of riddles and jokes. The children read, brought from home, told, and wrote a variety of riddles that have been around for years, if not generations. For example, "Wi did the bridey [birdy] krass the streyt?" "To get to the athr [other] side." "Why dou Birds fly south [in] wintr?" "Because its to far to walk." The children were making connections to the pasts of their parents, grandparents, and, perhaps, beyond by joining the community of joke tellers, riddle makers, and tall-tale weavers that helps to keep our language fresh and vital.

Why are elephants like teachers?

I wrote a letter to a first-grade class with whom I worked and told them what I did over the Christmas vacation and what I received in the way of presents. The teacher and students shared my letter and decided to write back telling me what they had received as gifts. The teacher suggested drawing a picture of one gift and describing it with a sentence or two. The students however, disagreed. They said, "He likes riddles, so let's make him guess what we got!" Each student wrote a riddle describing one gift (for example, it is pink; you wear it; it has a star on it; it is soft; it is made of "weelweo" [wool]) and then drew a picture and wrote the name of the gift on the other side of the paper (a sweater); I had to guess each riddle.

This is the kind of language use we want to foster in the classroom: spontaneous, social, imaginative, and student controlled. We want children to incorporate the language of a tremendous variety of texts into their own thinking and use. Elephant riddles and other kinds of riddles and jokes will help them do this. Try telling some elephant riddles the next time you meet your class. "What did the students say to the teacher who told elephant riddles the first thing in the morning?" You provide the answer.

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Riddles: Fun with language across the curriculum

Rita Buchoff

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What did the teacher say when the student wrote WETHR?
("That's the worst spell of weather we've had in a long time.")

Why should you work on your penmanship?
(It is the write thing to do.)

(Jansen, 1995)

Have you ever marveled at the pleasure and excitement students experience when they discover a book of riddles? Riddles appeal to children because they offer an opportunity to experiment with language in unexpected or unusual ways. When presented with riddles, students carefully search for clues that help solve the mystery, and they feel a sense of accomplishment when the answer is acquired. Even when they are unable to answer the riddle and have to glance at the solution, their enthusiasm is not diminished as they ardently continue to peruse these thought-provoking opportunities seen as play.

Although commonly viewed as a leisure-time activity, riddles actually have great potential in the classroom for developing higher level thinking skills, enhancing language and literacy skills, and promoting skills in specific content areas as well as interest in other cultures. Age-appropriate riddles are certain to bring the satisfaction that encourages children to return to them repeatedly. Through these brief puzzles, students develop valuable learning while they discover the joy that results from the manipulation of language.

Creating interest

Typically children become curious about riddles in kindergarten and first grade as they experiment with language and humor. Teachers can capitalize on this natural interest by displaying a bulletin board of riddles. Excitement is generated when the solutions to these puzzles are not immediately revealed. In addition to the bulletin board, it is important to include riddle books in the classroom library. Although most children are captivated by riddles, this form of literature can

also be useful in persuading those with negative attitudes about reading that books can be a source of pleasure.

Riddle books vary in difficulty, format, and content and can be selected to meet the interests and curriculum needs of all elementary children. Younger students will enjoy the picture version of a popular guessing game, *I See Something You Don't See: A Riddle-Me Picture Book* (Koontz, 1992). The simplicity of the text combined with the illustrated solutions ensures that emergent readers succeed as riddle solvers. Picture clues are also included in *What Am I? Very First Riddles* (Calmenson, 1989). Using familiar topics and charming rhyming verses, the content of this book will appeal to most young children.

Early learners will easily recognize this object.

> You'll find us on your birthday cake,
> Each one of us aglow,
> Close your eyes and make a wish,
> Then take a breath and blow.
> What are we?

Many riddle books have been written for the beginning reader, including *Grizzly Riddles* (Hall & Eisenberg, 1989). With its large type, simple text, and one riddle per page, children will savor the word play of bear riddles as they answer questions such as "What do girl grizzlies wear in their hair?" Of course, they wear "Bear-ettes!"

A number of innovative and interestingly formatted riddle books will appeal to elementary students. *Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road? And Other Riddles Old and New* (Cole & Calmenson, 1994) offers a brief history of riddles along with a varied and delightful collection that will please most riddle lovers. In *Monika Beisner's Book of Riddles* (Beisner, 1983), readers are provided the double challenge of finding the depicted solution to 101 riddles in the beautiful, highly detailed illustrations that face each page. Many riddles are quite abstract and will therefore test the wit and observational skills of even experienced riddle enthusiasts.

American folklore is also a source of riddles and an important segment of our literary heritage. *Unriddling: All Sorts of Riddles to Puzzle Your Guessery* (Schwartz, 1987) includes many unusual riddle forms collected from past generations as well as interesting information about the source of each riddle. This riddle demonstrates how the solution is actually contained within the words of the riddle.

> Around the corner there is a tree.
> Under the tree there is a school.
> In the school there is a desk.
> On the desk there is a bell.
> Behind the desk there is a teacher.
> What is her name?
>
> (Schwartz, 1987, p. 71)

(The teacher's first name is Isabelle. The answer is found in the fourth line of the riddle in the words "is a bell.") This collection is sure to stretch the reader's imagination with mysteries to ponder and humor to keep children amused.

Riddle books are not only pleasurable; they also assist in developing cogni-

tive skills. Through riddles, children gather and interpret data, make inferences, and draw conclusions. When provided with the riddle's solution, they interpret this new information, construct meanings to clarify and extend knowledge, and gain insight into the essence of these brief puzzles as well as their own learning.

Developing literacy skills

Riddles can be an integral part of a language arts program since they present stimulating opportunities to develop communication competencies. Through this age-old form of wordplay, students can improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

After students have had time to peruse the riddle books on the library table, they should be encouraged to recount their favorite riddles during daily sharing time. Students must speak fluently, communicate with accurate pronunciation and diction, organize information logically, and make eye contact with listeners. In order to critically analyze the information and respond to the riddle, listeners need to pay careful attention to the oral clues provided. This cycle repeats itself when students, with renewed purpose and enthusiasm, return to reading to locate new riddles that can be shared aloud with classmates.

Riddles can be effectively integrated into the writing curriculum. An easy way to teach riddling is to brainstorm hink-pinks, hinky-pinkies, and hinkety-pinketies. A *hink-pink* contains two or more one-syllable words that rhyme; a *hinky-pinky* contains two or more two-syllable rhyming words; and a *hinkety-pinkety* contains two or more three-syllable rhyming words (Bromley, 1992). Children think of rhymed answers to their riddles.

Hink-pink
What do you call an unhappy father?
sad dad

Hinky-pinky
What is another name for a silly rabbit?
funny bunny

Hinkety-pinkety
What is the one answer to the problems of our environment?
pollution solution

As children experiment with these models, vocabulary development can be expanded when a thesaurus or dictionary is used to facilitate the writing of the questions. Any new words acquired can be added to a classroom word wall or compiled within the student's personal word list.

In *Funny You Should Ask: How to Make Up Jokes and Riddles With Wordplay* (Terban, 1992), readers learn how to create riddles using homonyms or sound-alike words, homographs or words with more than one meaning, and idioms or commonly used expressions. Humorous hints along with the suggested word lists are certain to stimulate the child's creative efforts. For those aspiring to compose riddles using spelling tricks, metaphors, or famous names, *Fiddle With a Riddle: Write Your Own Riddles* (Bernstein, 1979) offers directions and many entertaining examples.

Teachers can provide students opportunities to celebrate authorship by sharing their finished samples. An informal technique for displaying riddles is through a classroom graffiti wall. This is easily constructed by covering a portion of a wall or door with a roll of paper and placing colorful writing instruments within easy reach. Children should be requested to write their riddles and solutions on the wall and include an illustration if desired. Readers of the graffiti wall attempt to solve these puzzles; solutions are concealed with self-sticking paper.

Riddles can also be presented through bookmaking activities. Using the publishing formats for flap books, pop-up books, or pages assembled with envelopes or pockets, students can hide the answers to the riddles so they are not immediately visible.

When classrooms offer children the comfort of a shared laugh, the mental challenge of associating sound with meaning, and the fun of identifying clues, students are inspired to collect and create more riddles.

Riddling in the content areas

Math and science. Riddles challenge the brain, add humor to content areas, and invite children to look at math and science in a novel manner. In *Math Tricks, Puzzles, & Games* (Blum, 1994) the language of wordplay must be used to solve mathematical reasoning dilemmas. The relationship of two coins is illustrated in the following puzzle:

> Two U.S. coins total 30 cents, but one is not a nickel. What are the two coins?
>
> Hint: Think about the wording. One is not a nickel.
>
> (The two coins are a quarter and a nickel. The quarter is not a nickel.) (Blum, 1994, p. 92)

Many sophisticated questions enable students to blend literacy strategies with mathematical calculations and logic in *263 Brain Busters: Just How Smart Are You, Anyway?* (Phillips, 1985). Although the following problem seems very forthright, the interpretation of the wording can create a totally different perspective.

> Divide 80 by one-half and add 15. What is the answer?
>
> (Most people who answer this question quickly will say 55. Alas, 55 is not the correct answer. The correct answer is 175. (80 divided by 1/2 = 160. 160 + 15 = 175) (Phillips, 1985, p. 35)

The $1.00 Word Riddle Book (Burns, 1990) enables children to practice addition skills while discovering the answers to riddles. In this edition, a = $.01, b = $.02, c = $.03 and so on up to z = $.26. Using the values of each letter, the solutions must add up to exactly US$1.00.

> What do you call the United States Senate and House of Representatives together?
>
> Answer: Congress
>
> (c = $.03, o = $.15, n = $.14, g = $.07, r = $.18, e = $.05, s = $.19, s = $.19

$.03 + $.15 + $.14 + $.07 + $.18 + $.05 + $.19 + $.19 = $1.00) (Burns, 1990, p. 26)

Riddle books can also be selected to reflect the wit and humor of scientific topics. *The Wackiest Nature Riddles on Earth* (Artell, 1993) focuses on ecological or environmental topics such as forests, mountains, birds, and weather. *Plugged In: Electric Riddles* (Peterson, 1995) illustrates the relationship between the sounds and meanings of words.

> How do you ask a lightbulb if something is wrong?
> (You say, "Watts the matter.")
> (Peterson, 1995, p. 8)

Social studies and multicultural education. Riddles support children in developing a global view that appreciates the richness of other countries and cultures. In *Stories to Solve: Folktales From Around the World* (Shannon, 1985) and *More Stories to Solve: Fifteen Folktales From Around the World* (Shannon, 1991), folktales from around the world are presented with a problem or a mystery to be solved. Each story is unique and can be interpreted through cleverness, common sense, or careful observation of the details in the text. The author not only includes the solutions to these intriguing stories, but also documents the country in which the folktale originated. These puzzlers, when integrated into the social studies curriculum, provide opportunities for locating each nation on a map or globe, reading additional stories native to the country, and studying more about the culture.

In the first book of its kind, *Lightning Inside You: And Other Native American Riddles* (Bierhorst, 1992), the Native American riddling tradition is revealed in this carefully researched collection that includes more than 120 riddles from twenty Native American languages. Bierhorst demonstrates how these riddles are linked to the life and customs of the people who originated them and includes within the book a comprehensive introduction and bibliography. It is interesting that although many Native American riddles seem to talk about a person, the solution is actually a thing or an animal. A riddle from the Guarani tribe of Paraguay and northern Argentina illustrates this.

> Wonder, wonder,
> What can they be?
> The two young women who sit side by side without seeing each other.
> (Your ears) (Bierhorst, 1992, p. 34)

This outstanding book will assist students in developing a clearer understanding of Native Americans and a desire to learn more about them.

Share the fun

Reciting riddles creates much excitement across the curriculum. This enthusiasm can be shared with parents when they are invited to the classroom for an afternoon of riddling. Students can present their favorite riddles, explain techniques for riddle writing, and even collab-

orate with parents to design a few new ones. In addition, the program can be combined with a humorous story, rib-tickling poetry, and a delicious dessert of riddle stew (a fruit salad in which each parent contributes one fruit). Through such an event, parents and children are actively involved in enjoyable literacy activities that can easily continue at home.

Riddles bring a hearty laugh to children while heightening opportunities to facilitate language learning across the curriculum. By supporting a natural curiosity with words, providing challenging experiences, and motivating through the power of humor, riddles make learning and using language fun for all!

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Motivating children to read more nonfiction

Mariam Jean Dreher

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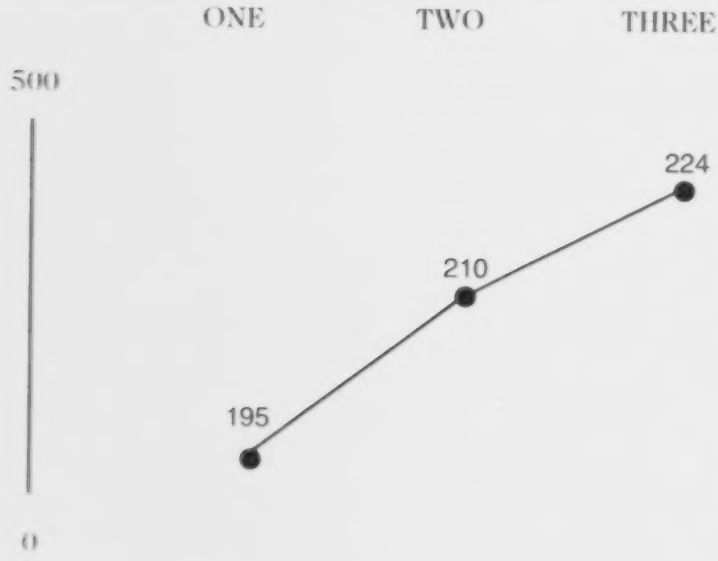
As Trabasso (1994) put it, "The narrative is especially pervasive in the elementary school curriculum. It has been estimated, in fact, that as much as 90% of what is read by elementary school children is narrative in form" (p. 187). Even if we decide that this estimate is too high, it is clear that an imbalance exists between fiction and nonfiction reading in elementary school. Indeed, the emphasis on narratives means that we should not be surprised by a recurring theme in discussions of literacy problems: students' lack of facility with expository or nonfiction text. Further, as studies of school children indicate, they do less well on exposition than with narrative (both reading it and producing it) (e.g., Hidi & Hildyard, 1983; Langer, 1985).

If students do less well with nonfiction than with narratives, and if they have much less exposure in elementary school to nonfiction than to narratives, then the need for increased experience with nonfiction materials is clear. In fact, the results of the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) clearly support this notion. As can be seen in Figure 1, fourth graders' reading achievement increases as the diversity of their reported reading experience increases. In other words, fourth graders who reported reading not only stories but also magazines and information books had the highest achievement. These NAEP findings also showed that students in the top third achieving schools reported reading more information books at school than students in the bottom third schools (Campbell, Kapinus, & Beatty, 1995).

Most likely the relationship between diverse reading and reading comprehension is due to the increased exposure to new vocabulary and new ideas that such reading provides children. Research has established, for example, that wide reading correlates with vocabulary development and general knowledge in fourth to sixth graders, even when differences in general ability and phonological coding ability are controlled (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991). Consequently, an important concern for the elementary school is increasing children's exposure to print, including nonfiction.

Figure 1
Fourth graders' reading proficiency by number of different reading materials



Fourth graders who read all three types of materials—storybooks, magazines, and information books—had the highest proficiency.

Source: Campbell, J.R., & Ashworth, K.P. (Eds.). (1995). *Report in brief: A synthesis of data from NAEP's Integrated Reading Performance Record at Grade 4* (p. 4). Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics. Reprinted by permission.

So what can we do to increase children's exposure to nonfiction? One approach is to modify and extend some time-honored practices: (a) reading to children every day, and (b) providing time for children to read something of their own choosing every day. When Fry (1991) asked leaders in the field of reading to list their ten best ideas for reading teachers, these two suggestions were on most lists. This article describes how to modify these two practices not only to motivate children to read more, but also to extend their reading to a variety of nonfiction material.

First, read to the children every day and be systematic in including nonfiction books, magazines, and other materials. Doing so is important for opening children's eyes to the wonderful materials that are available. In this way, interest is created, which motivates children to read not only the material presented but also similar works. With fiction, it has long been known that when they read stories

by Judy Blume or C.S. Lewis, children suddenly check out every available book by those authors, and a waiting list forms at the media center. Experience shows that the same thing happens with nonfiction. For example, reading an article such as "Blackbeard: A Lit Fuse" from *Cobblestone* (Zuber, 1993) leads many children to try that magazine for the first time. Similarly, other children are led to topics and genres they have not previously explored by sharing excerpts from *Science Magic With Water* (Oxlade, 1994) and "They Call This Lunch?" in *Zillions* (1997). Chapters from such books as *Immigrants* (Sandler, 1995), *Herstory: Women Who Changed the World* (Ashby & Ohrn, 1995), and *Bigfoot* (Bach, 1995) are also effective in expanding children's variety of reading. A log is kept of what is read to children in order to monitor the balance of different types of material.

Second, the appropriateness of nonfiction reading during children's daily silent reading time is highlighted. Many children seem to assume that daily silent reading time is the exclusive province of fiction. In my area the acronym for daily periods of sustained silent reading is Drop Everything and Read (DEAR). During DEAR time, students choose their own reading but are encouraged to expand their repertoire from almost exclusively fiction to choosing nonfiction materials as well. Figure 2 shows a record form that helps in this effort. On this form, children keep track of what they read during DEAR time. Keeping a list of titles is in itself quite important for helping children feel a sense of accomplishment.

However, columns two and three of Figure 2 are of particular value in this effort. In the Format column, children indicate whether they are reading books, magazines, or other formats. In the Color Code column, children code the type of material they are reading by subject area (fiction, biography, how to do it, social studies, science, poetry or other). Each child can decide on his or her own color scheme, or the class can decide on colors as a group. To emphasize further the value of diverse reading, students can periodically make a class chart or graph of the types and formats of their reading choices. They can also color code classroom reading material with stickers that match the colors they have selected for each type of material. Color coding the class collection not only is fun, but also it gives students practice in evaluating book categories.

The content of these forms can be modified to fit a particular teacher's goals. For example, in the third column of Figure 2, a teacher might want to list different formats. But by including columns two and three in Figure 2, children are signaled that different genres and formats are not only acceptable but encouraged during sustained silent reading.

Finally, another time-honored message is endorsed by making reading material very accessible. Although there is wide agreement on the value of easy access, accessibility is often neglected, especially for nonfiction material. Thus, teachers work with the media specialist to get children into the library more frequently. Everyone knows this is important, but the constant barrage of demands on teachers and chil-

Figure 2
DEAR time reading record

Name _____

Date	Color code	Format Magazine Book Other	Title
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	
		M B O	

If you are reading something long, you might put the same title several days in a row.

dren (especially in overcrowded schools) means that, in reality, children just aren't in the media center as often as is ideal. Once in the media center, it can't be assumed that children remember where nonfiction materials are. Many techniques are used to highlight the variety of available books, from attractive displays to personalized recommendation cards inserted in the bookshelves like those encountered in bookstores.

Also, as important as the media center is, having materials right in the classroom is even more inviting. So an effort is made to stock the classroom library with appealing resources. Nonfiction is included along with fiction in rotating displays in the classrooms. Teachers solicit donations, visit book sales, and check out material from the public library to supplement school resources. Sometimes school or Parent Teacher Association funds can be obtained for classroom subscriptions to nonfiction children's magazines such as *Cobblestone*, *Zillions*, and *Ranger Rick*. The closer the material is to children, the more likely they are to read it.

To address children's nonfiction needs fully, teachers must do more than just expose them to nonfiction. Motivating children to read more nonfiction is an important first step.

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Book commercials

Tammy N. Adams
Edward J. Dwyer

VOLUME 50, NUMBER 1, SEPTEMBER 1996

"Are you tired of lies, lies, and more lies? It's time you learned the truth. You can learn the true story of the three little pigs as told by me, Alexander T. Wolf."

"To get your copy of *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* call 1-800-PIGS LIE. All major credit cards accepted. Just $14.95 plus $3.00 for shipping and handling. Call now for your copy of *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. Call 1-800-PIGS LIE."

TV commercials are a part of nearly every child's life. Our students like to write their own commercials for books and authors they like. They draft commercials, share them with other students, edit, and then prepare a final script. Though it is not required in the commercial, most students thoroughly enjoy the challenge of determining a fitting 800 number (e.g., 1-800-RED FERN). The finished script can be included in their language arts portfolios.

The next activity is the actual presentation of the commercial. Students create a variety of interesting ways to sell the book they have chosen. They often imitate the style of advertisers they have seen on TV. Local automobile dealers, for example, are good models for the quick, high-impact sales pitch. Our students sometimes do commercials collaboratively in pairs and/or small groups.

The cliffhanger commercial is very popular. In this format, the advertiser promotes a book by enthusiastically presenting information concerning an exciting part of a book but leaves the audience hanging. "To find out what happens...."

The author commercial is another highly worthwhile variation. In this format, the advertiser presents several books by an author and vigorously encourages classmates to read a book by that particular author. For example, a student might present four or five books by Beverly Cleary.

Students are asked to use the actual book in the commercial and are invited to use other props as well. For example, a stuffed bear might be used to represent a major character in a story.

The commercials run from about 30 seconds to 1 minute in length. This time

frame seems realistic given the TV format. Limiting time encourages energetic presentations. We also audiotape the commercials.

The book commercial is a delightful variation on the traditional book report—it's fun for everyone. A good commercial can result in a waiting list for a book in the school library or a run on books by a particular author.

We guarantee you'll love doing book commercials. If you're not completely satisfied with this strategy, simply return this article within 30 days to the author for a full refund!

Jackdaws improve reading attitudes

Joan Gibbs

VOLUME 50, NUMBER 8, MAY 1997

"I hate reading!"
"Read? I never do it!"
"I watch videos. I don't read books!"

These answers appeared on a reading survey that I gave my students at the beginning of the school year. The course was seventh- and eighth-grade remedial reading, and the students brought with them a wide range of learning challenges. Most students read on a fourth- or fifth-grade level; however, some were even lower.

They came to the class believing they would fail this class as they had so many others. The most popular topics of conversation before the tardy bell rang concerned dropping out of school, drugs, alcohol, gangs, and their acceptance of peer pressure as a driving force to make decisions. After 6 weeks, I noted an increasing number of absences, tardies, and discipline referrals.

My mentor advised me to keep my lessons highly structured. She had success teaching her classes with novel units and daily comprehension questions. Because I respected her 14 years of experience, I decided to abandon my interactive-style lessons and implement her suggestions. To begin class, I chose to read aloud from contemporary high interest novels while they followed along in their copies.

I stayed with the plans through March, although I had observed very little improvement in attitudes. Some students were still not able to follow my simple instructions to have only their novel on their desks and to follow as I read. They were staring at anything but the book, talking to their neighbors, drawing pictures, or writing notes to their friends. The majority were not on task, and discipline was becoming an overwhelming challenge. The quality of responses to comprehension check questions was dropping and grades were spiraling downward.

I decided to show jackdaws at the beginning of each class. The jackdaws were items I found on pages of the chapter that would be read in class that day. They were chosen specifically to grab students' attention. As I held them up for the class to

see, they wrote predictions of how they might appear in the story. They based their predictions on what had happened so far in the book.

I brought in such items as a dirty garbage can, which represented where the street people extracted their meals; a real wasps' nest which was used in the book as a method of diversion; and an old car tire, which was cut and used for homemade sandals. Students received extra points for making predictions. Those who arrived late to class missed the chance to take part in this activity.

More students were seated and ready to work when class began because they were curious to see what weird items I had brought that day. They agonized over their statements because they wanted their guess to be right. We discussed the predictions before and after reading. It was fun to see who was closest to the actual event.

It wasn't until a student asked if she could bring the predictions for the next chapter that I began to see the potential for student involvement. They were showing signs of interest in what we were doing! Therefore, I separated them into groups of three and let them use Drop Everything And Read time to read ahead for ideas of what to bring to class the next day. My only requirements were that they not bring items that were not allowed at school. More students chose to arrive to class on time, their grades improved, and discipline was not as much of a challenge. Each group tried to shock the others with its originality. Moreover, I enjoyed teaching, and the students enjoyed learning.

Yes, active learning can work in an academically challenged class. It boldly altered attitudes and allowed for academic improvement, which transferred into core courses. I was delighted with the direction my philosophy of teaching had taken and with the progress of my students. Next school year I look forward to engaging the students in learning from day one!

Kindergarteners "choose" to read

Alayna M. Henderson

VOLUME 49, NUMBER 7, APRIL 1996

Have you ever wondered how to provide your kindergarten students with more opportunities to read and interact with stories? Would you like to have more time for small group or individual conferences and have your students meaningfully engaged?

Several years ago, I implemented a new set of reading centers, called Reading Choices, designed to offer my students choices of activities which reinforce reading skills. These centers allow for freedom of movement, and each child participates in a way appropriate to his/her own developmental level. Various Reading Choices centers are described in the box. During Reading Choices time, I work with small groups on guided reading, hold individual reading conferences, or circulate to observe my students in action and take advantage of impromptu teaching opportunities.

Reading Choices time is scheduled in the afternoon, separate from the developmental centers common in many kindergarten classrooms. The students select an option from the centers pictured on our calendar board and then work individually or with a partner for 15–20 minutes. At the end of the period, I ring a bell, the signal for cleanup, and we return to the circle. Time is then devoted to sharing what students did during Reading Choices.

If you are interested in setting up reading centers in your classroom, there are some things you will need to do:

1. Decide on the centers you will provide. You may want to begin with just a few choices (enough to spread out your students) and add more later.

2. Work out a floor plan with places to house your centers. You will find that little nooks and crannies work beautifully.

3. Gather the equipment and materials necessary.

4. Make two sets of signs for your centers. Label the centers with one set. Post the other as a visual reference for students while making choices.

When the day arrives to introduce the centers to the students, go slowly. Over a period of 2 weeks, model the use of the equipment (headphones, tape recorders, overheads, etc.) many times. You will not want to be interrupted from small group work because of technical difficulties. Show where each center will be located. Model the correct procedure for making choices, proceeding to centers, and most

important, what students are expected to do at the centers.

Once your students are actively engaged, you will have time for meeting individual needs. The students will benefit from the valuable rehearsing and reinforcing opportunities that you have provided.

Suggested Reading Choices centers

Poem box—Using wipe-off markers, students circle familiar letters, letter combinations, or words they know on large poster-size laminated poems.

Tape a story—Students make a recording of a favorite story. Readings from all developmental levels are encouraged.

Magnetic letters—Magnetic letters are used to spell names, familiar words, or sequence the alphabet.

Overhead—Students illustrate stories printed on overhead transparencies. They also sequence and retell the story when the illustrations are complete.

Read the room—Using a pointer, students move around the room reading print. They may read from the calendar, lunch chart, bulletin board, etc.

Write the room—With clipboard and paper, students record print they observe around the room.

Flannelboard—Favorite stories or songs are retold with both commercial and teacher-made flannel sets. Students may also create a story of their own.

Bookmaking—Students are involved in all aspects of the bookmaking process: writing, illustrating, preparing covers.

Interactive charts—Familiar chants, poems, and songs written on sentence strips are laminated to posterboard. Students manipulate missing pieces of each chant, poem, or song as they read and sing along.

Pocket chart—Both commercial and teacher-made sentence strips are sequenced and used to retell a story.

Poetry notebook—Reduced copies of theme-related poems, chants, and songs are available for students to glue into personal poetry notebooks.

Read with a friend—Students select any book in the classroom to read with a friend.

Reading garden—A corner preserved for quiet reading with plenty of class-made books, trade books, poetry, taped stories, and flannelboard.

Big books—Students read favorite big books on an easel.

Bookboxes—Students read smaller copies of big books and books that we have used in guided reading.

Listening—Multiple copies of books and cassettes are made available.

Author center—Books grouped by author are used to compare style, content, and illustrations.

Charts—Students read the large hanging charts that we use during our warmup for shared reading. The charts may be poems, songs, or chants. Students often use sticky notes to create their own innovations.

Theme books—Emergent level books are placed in deep pocket charts for independent exploration.

Cooperative group rotation

Betty Mermelstein

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If you're wondering how to make use of cooperative groups in a different way, try cooperative group rotation. I have used this method with children as young as second graders, and it can be modified for various grade levels and subject areas.

In cooperative group rotation, the students themselves are not rotating; their resource books are. First, students are divided into groups of four or five. Jobs are assigned at the beginning of each day's session: reader, note taker, and leader. These jobs are directed to a different person in the group each day, with the opportunity of one acting as an assistant if someone needs help. As with all cooperative grouping, jobs are defined and discussed with the class before groups meet, and ground rules are set for group conduct.

Books on the subject matter being taught are chosen from fiction and nonfiction. The number of books chosen should be at least the number of groups formed in the classroom. The second-semester second graders I was working with were studying the life cycle of frogs, so I found these books on the subject to be useful: *Frogs and Toads* by Jane Dallinger and Sylvia A. Johnson, *The Frog* by Margaret Lane, *Tadpole and Frog* by Christine Back and Barrie Watts, *A Frog's Body* by Joanna Cole, *Bullfrog Builds a House* by Rosamond Dauer, *Frog Went A-Courtin'* by John Langstaff, and any of the books from the Frog and Toad series by Arnold Lobel.

One book is given to each group during a session. The reader reads the book aloud to the rest of the group, stopping at the end of each page. The leader may remind the reader to do this, if necessary, and the leader also solicits answers to the question "What do you think was important on that page?" The note taker writes down the group's answers, remembering that spelling is not crucial at this point. A fictional story may not lend itself to many important facts about the subject, but the story could be retold in sequence by the group and written down by the note taker.

When the group has finished, each student begins or continues with a project about the subject, using the book and the note taker's list as resources. Choices of projects may be composing different styles of poems, drawing a picture showing the subject in its setting, writing a paragraph containing important information

about the subject, creating an adjective word web, writing a creative story about the subject, making a puppet, and so forth.

For the next session, the books are rotated around the groups, so that all of the groups will have experienced each book eventually.

Finally, each person chooses his/her best project to display on a large sheet of cardboard for the group. The projects become part of a whole class bulletin board on the subject. Because everyone has come in contact with all of the books, it's a treat to hear the discussion about which one they liked the best and to see how different their projects were for each book!

Through cooperative group rotation, students have access to a variety of books in a small group setting, participate actively, and use information to create projects that demonstrate knowledge about the subject.

"I know that book's here somewhere!": How to organize your classroom library

Hollie Brooks

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Books strewn from one end of the bookshelves to the other. Not knowing what books you have or where they are located. Sound familiar? This scenario describes the plight of many classroom libraries each year. Since I had over 300 books in my classroom library, I needed a system to change this predicament.

The system I developed uses a computer database and student librarians. One benefit is that the number of library books is always known. Another is that both teacher and students have access to all information concerning the classroom library, such as specific titles, authors, and subjects. Students keep the library more organized as their involvement in its management and maintenance increases.

The first step in starting this system is to separate the books into sections in your library:

- Arrange the books in sections such as mystery, biography, science, reference, history, and fiction. Choose anywhere from 5 to 8 sections, depending on the make-up of the library.
- Place a small white sticker on the lower part of the spine of each book.
- Write the first three letters of the author's last name on the sticker.
- Alphabetize each section by authors' last names.

The next step involves putting the books into a computer database. This calls for only a small amount of computer literacy. Most database programs are fairly simple to use. Here are the steps used:

- Decide on the database fields for your library system, such as title, author, subject, and section. Enter those fields into the database.
- Enter the information from the books into the corresponding fields.
- Make three copies of the library's database: one on the hard drive for

teacher use, one on the hard drive for student use, and one copy on a disk as a back up.

Involve students in the management and maintenance of this library system. The following suggestions worked for a fifth-grade classroom:

- Use a spiral notebook for students to check books out. Have the students write title, author, their name, and the date in the notebook. (Computer use for checkout is not feasible in the classroom due to lack of equipment, such as a scanner, and lack of time.)
- When students choose their books, have them place a personalized cardboard marker in place of the book on the shelf. These markers stay in these spots until the students return the books.
- Choose students as class librarians to ensure proper implementation of the checkout system, including the addition of new books to the database. At the end of the day, class librarians will ensure proper placement of each book in the library. Student librarians save teachers an abundance of time.

This library system teaches students real life applications, gives them responsibility, and exposes them to a computer. Using the system benefits everyone involved. Teachers need not tackle this project alone. Parent volunteers can be extremely helpful. Implementing and using this library system does not consume too much time when compared to the time wasted each year looking for books and straightening up.

Creating a culturally sensitive classroom library

Danny Brassell

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In examining California's so-called "literacy crisis," one does not have to search much further than the school library's bookshelves. California ranks next to last in books-per-student in its school libraries (White, 1990), and that situation is accentuated in inner-city schools. I know—I used to teach in one. It was an experience nobody could forget.

Picture a place where over 80% of the students speak Spanish as their primary language but over 90% of the books are in English. The school district expects you to increase students' reading ability by 1.6 years in 8 months. There are not enough textbooks for students even to share in pairs. You've left suburban reality and entered "the inner-city zone."

In the world of my school, I was forced to face the reality that my second graders did not have a chance if drastic actions were not taken. That's when I decided it was time for us to create our own library.

It has been well documented that children read more when books are made available to them (Krashen, 1993). Providing only books for my limited English proficient students, however, did not seem to be enough. As Cummins (1991) points out, schools more often contribute to second language learners' academic difficulties rather than assist their language acquisition development. My students needed material in their own language so that what they read was comprehensible to them.

So we began to make books ourselves. We made big books about our families, friends, and neighborhoods. We made little books to share with our friends about pets, dinosaurs, and superheroes. We created classroom newspapers and bulletins to share with the school and our parents to show what we were doing in Room 12. "Somos autores," we said as our class motto. "We are authors."

Room 12's authors were good writers because they were becoming avid readers. Our classroom library became filled with magazines about the Los Angeles Lakers, storybooks about Ferdinando, and newspapers with funny comic strips. Our library contained items in Spanish and English, with and without pictures. "Nuestra biblioteca" became the pride of our

Number of books available and read in the classroom library		
Week	Number of books available	Number of books read
1. Sept. 18–22	78	198
2. Sept. 25–29	155	256
3. Oct. 1–5	239	301
4. Oct. 8–12	275	319
5. Oct. 15–19 (4-day week)	321	284
6. Oct. 22–26	403	370

classroom, and we anxiously showed off our library to the rest of the school.

The results were very positive. In a 6-week period students created a library of over 400 books from scratch. Books ranged in length from 6 to 30 pages. Some were typed, and others were handwritten. All books were laminated and placed in a corner library that was easily accessible to all students.

Student interest in books sky-rocketed. Students loved to write stories ranging from their visits to Mexico to the mysterious monster known as the "chupacabra." They were delighted to put their names on the books they wrote, and we began placing "author autobiographies" on the back covers of books, complete with pictures of the authors and descriptions of their other books and interests.

A sign-out list kept track of books students took home to read each night. Students could take home as many books as they wanted, as long as they checked the books out and returned them within the next 2 days. As they had created the library themselves, students took a lot of care in handling their books and returning them. After all, they did not dare risk ruining a friend's creation. Lists were kept for each day of the week for a 6-week period near the beginning of the fall semester. The Table lists the number of books available in their library, as well as the number of books students read each week.

The results indicate that students read more when they had more books in their library. Student enrollment fluctuated between 31 and 42 students during the 6-week period, but it is, nonetheless, remarkable to see that as the classroom library increased from 78 to 403 books, student reading increased from 198 to 370 books—almost double! Although no comparisons were made to other classrooms, it was quite evident to the entire school community that Room 12's second graders had an extraordinary passion for books not seen in other classrooms.

Most importantly, for many students our classroom library was their first opportunity to have a wide exposure to books in Spanish. Our classroom library not only improved students' reading but their atti-

tudes toward their own culture as well. As their teacher I could not ask for two more important or noble achievements.

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Helping children use the classroom library

Pat Prill

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"I don't have a book to read."

"I just can't find one."

"I don't know if I'll like it."

"Will you help me?"

After hearing these comments year after year, I decided there must be a better way of utilizing my classroom library. To help these reluctant readers, I created a program called Get Acquainted With My Books. This program assists many of my hard-to-please readers and makes good use of the books I've purchased for my room.

At the beginning of each school year, I use one 30-minute period a day for the first 2 weeks to introduce the books in my room. I randomly select 6 books per day and display them on the chalkboard ledge. Book reviewers for the day are listed on the board. These reviewers are to grab a book to review and skim through it when they have some free time.

The format for skimming a book is taught in a minilesson on the first day of class. This format hangs on the wall for future reference: (a) read the title and the table of contents, (b) look for illustrations, (c) determine the number of pages, and (d) read the book jacket for the story and author summary. Reviewers also determine a reading level.

Students are given a folder containing several pages prepared with spaces for book review information. Each time a book is reviewed, students are to record the pertinent information requested on the form. The final part of the review is to give the book a personal star rating ranging from five stars (I must read this book) to one star (not my type of book).

I begin by modeling a 30-minute Get Acquainted With My Books minilesson. The information I relate includes title, author, number of pages, and reading level, if indicated. As I give my review, I write the information on the overhead for students to copy into their folders. Students listen as I read the book summary on the book jacket and display any illustrations. Then we decide the genre of the book and record this information. Students decide if this is the type of book they may be inter-

ested in reading. Their decisions are based on interest as well as level of readability.

After I have modeled this presentation, the students take turns giving their own book talks as the class listens, records, and reacts. The pages begin to fill with students' own book reviews. If a child is absent, the child can copy the information from another student or from the overhead transparency. We review about 60 books in that 2-week period. The books are displayed in the room on a rack by reading level. This allows the students to find their selections a little easier. Any books that do not have a reading level indicated are displayed together.

This program of introducing children to the books in my classroom library has proven successful in getting reluctant readers interested in reading. Now when students say "I can't find a book to read," I remind them of their book review folder, and they proceed independently!

Workshop Pedagogy—from concrete to abstract

Arne Trageton

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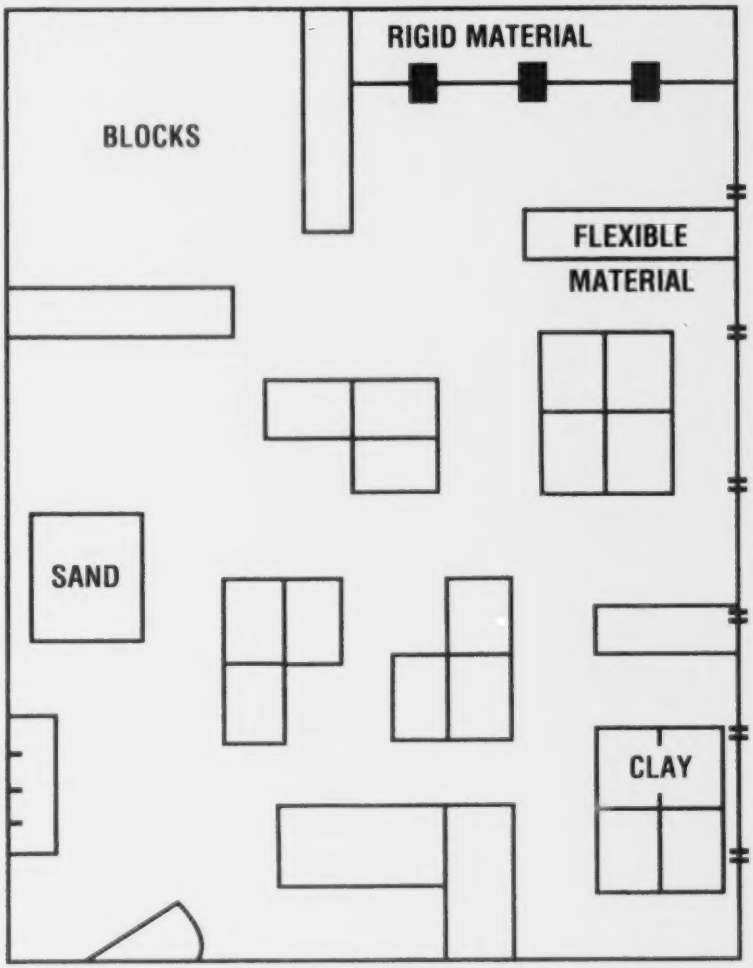
Workshop Pedagogy is an innovative approach that started with three classes in 1978 and has now become widely used in lower primary-grade classrooms in Norway and also in Sweden (Trageton, 1992). It was inspired by John Dewey's Laboratory School in Chicago (Dewey, 1899) and by the British *Integrated Day in the Primary School Movement* (Brown & Precious, 1968). Each class is divided into five groups of 4 to 6 children working with different art and craft media: clay, sand, blocks, rigid materials (cardboard, boxes, other packing materials, wood scraps) and flexible material (wire, chicken wire, foam rubber, wool, textiles) (see Figure 1).

During the first part of each day, the children use one of the five types of materials to *contruct* a three dimensional representation of concepts they have earlier experienced (for example, a person, a boat, a house). After that, they *dramatize* a story around their construction. Next, they *draw* an illustration related to the construction and dramatized story. Then, they *write* the story or, if they cannot write yet, dictate it to the teacher who writes it down. Finally, they *read* the story and *solve* mathematical problems connected to the construction and the story.

The class usually has a common theme, for instance family, fairy tales, or our town, lasting for one to three months and culminating in an exhibition for parents and other classes in school. The main role of the teacher is to organize the learning experiences and to be a dialogue partner with the children, asking probing questions to raise each child's level of conceptual understanding during constructing, dramatizing, drawing, writing, and computing. The common themes cut across all subjects, but science and social science, art and craft, language, and mathematics, in particular, profit from this integrated subject learning.

In this article I will discuss the language learning in Workshop Pedagogy. In Workshop Pedagogy the child is considered an active constructor of knowledge. Workshop Pedagogy involves the same activities as the Language Experience Approach (Leimar, 1974), but the sequence

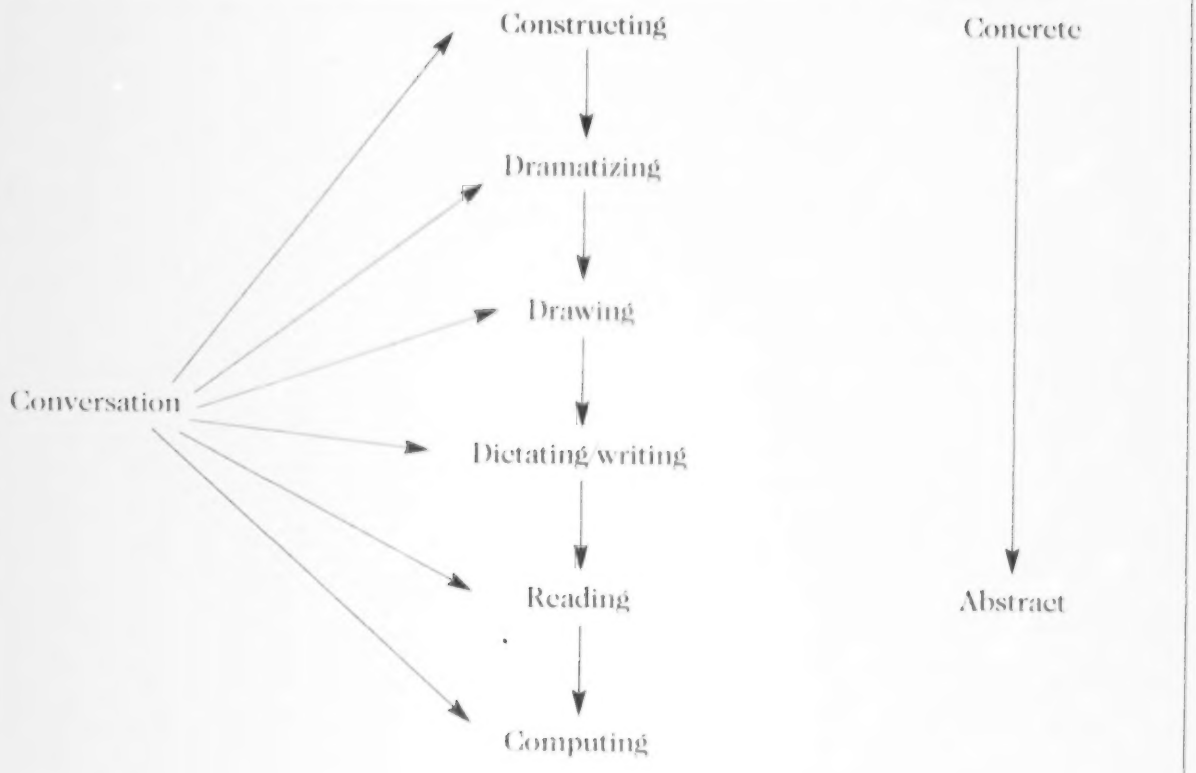
Figure 1
Placement of art and craft media in the classroom



is different. The more concrete expressions—drawing, dramatizing, constructing—are done *first*. Thus, the sequence moves from the concrete towards the more abstract with concrete expressions given more attention (see Figure 2).

This sequence provides both the bright and slower learner with a concrete, rich base for discussion, dictation/writing, and reading. This base of concrete activities is supported by Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences that stresses the importance of combining many different "languages" to express thoughts and feelings.

Figure 2
Workshop pedagogy sequence

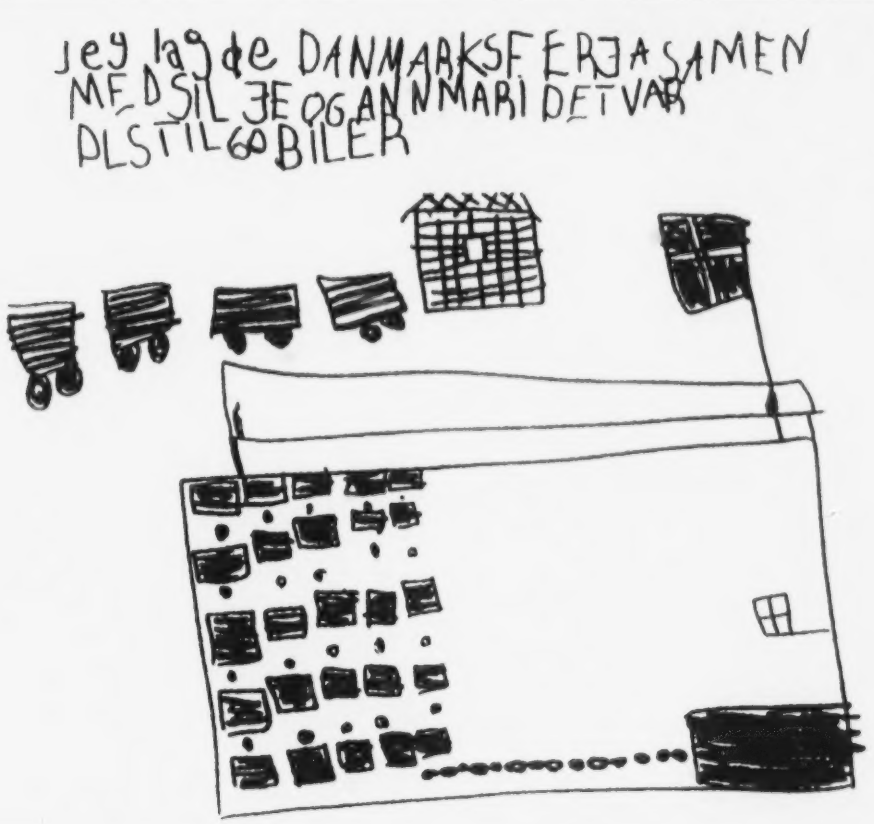


An example

"Our island" is the theme for 6- to 7-year-old pupils for 2 months. The children in the block corner *constructed* the big ferry going to Denmark. They also produced cars driving on to the ferry, the quay structures, and so on. This is a rather concrete representation and therefore easy to talk about. Then, they *dramatized* around cars rolling on board, tickets being bought, the captain giving his orders, and so on. This is also a very concrete representation and very stimulating for developing rich oral language. One of the children afterwards made a drawing (see Figure 3).

This graphic representation or language is considerably more abstract. Three dimensions become abstracted to two, all things are immovable, but still the drawing resembles many of the visible qualities of a ferry. The child was very interested in recording and computing the number of cars on the ferry. But in his writing, abstract arbitrary signs represent the ferry. They don't look like a ferry at all. At the beginning of the school year, the student had to *dictate* what the teacher should write. But

Figure 3
Sample drawing with story



now he has learned many of the curious scribbles named letters, and *writes* the following to accompany the drawing: *I have made the Denmark ferry together with Silje and Ann Mari. There were 60 cars on board.* (But the oral story is much more complicated. When the child masters the technical problems of writing in a year or two, the story can fill several pages.)

This strategy, from concrete to abstract, has proven effective both for bright and slow learners. Another advantage of Workshop Pedagogy is that the sequence moves from individual work to group work. The conversation with the individual child during constructing, drawing, and writing makes it easier for the teacher to regulate the discussion to the level of the individual child. As children develop, they are stimulated to combine their constructions, dramatizations, drawings, and writings into more advanced group stories. Slow learners can then become important members, contributing interesting and original ideas to the whole story.

In Workshop Pedagogy concrete activities like construction, drama, and drawing give children an expanded base to

draw upon while composing their stories. Combined with process-oriented writing, this strategy will bring us a step closer towards more effective writing and reading education for young children.

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Language master redux

Arne E. Sippola

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Does your school have a storage room full of Language Masters? These trusty machines, used frequently in special education and second-language programs, may still contribute to your efforts in assisting emergent readers when combined with more traditional listening-while-reading procedures. I developed a set of activities and materials using the Language Master while teaching in the primary grades in Anchorage, Alaska, USA.

Substantial research has demonstrated the efficacy of having young children listen to models of proficient reading while visually tracking corresponding text (Carbo, 1978; Chomsky, 1976; Heckelman, 1969; Hollingsworth, 1978; Sippola, 1988; Slaughter, 1993). These practices have been shown to improve word identification, fluency, comprehension, and general reading abilities in first-grade readers (Sippola, 1988).

Materials and procedures

I identified specific children's books to include in this component of my emergent literacy program. The criteria used for book identification was simple: I wanted interesting books that were of a repetitive and predictable nature. I tape recorded each book at approximately 80 words per minute–a rate that my students could follow and that retained the integrity of fluent reading.

I developed a second set of materials to complement the story tapes. I used a Bell & Howell Language Master and accompanying recording cards to develop phrase cards and vocabulary words thought to be new or challenging to the children reading specific stories. I typed each sentence containing a new vocabulary word onto a recording card. The new vocabulary word was underlined and printed carefully on the back of the recording card. I then recorded my reading of the sentence onto the card. As a result each story had 8 to 10 recording cards. Four sets of cards were developed for each book.

Small groups or individual children worked with a book that matched interests and instructional levels. The individual child or small group of children listened to the story tape and read along in the classroom listening center. Multiple

playings were allowed if the child or children needed repeated readings.

Once the storytape portion was completed, each participating reader went with a set of Language Master cards to the reading center, where the Language Master machines were located to play the cards while reading along. The readers practiced listening and reading the cards until they felt they could read the cards independently to me or a classroom assistant. They were required to read the back of the card with the new vocabulary word printed in isolation.

To demonstrate knowledge of the new word the child was asked to use the word in a sentence or to describe what it meant to him or her. Words that I or the classroom assistant determined to have "fuzzy" interpretations were taught on the spot, and the child was asked again to respond with a sentence or a description.

The child was then directed to read the corresponding book independently. Afterwards, the individual or small group was called for a quick book conference and extension activity.

As a result of this project my students grew rapidly in reading ability and motivation to read. They soon moved on to other literature-based programs that required more independence. It should be noted, however, that all of my emergent readers were taught to use a variety of word identification strategies (i.e., sight words, context, phonics, and structural clues) to assist in their independent reading.

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Flashlight reading: Making the reading process concrete

Larry W. Rennick
Karen M. Williams

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The imagination of youth often fascinates us, and on occasion a child's creative thought can lead to discoveries that help others. This happened last year when Andy, an inquisitive little boy just beginning to learn to read, let his imagination drive his actions.

Andy spotted something new in his first-grade classroom: a flashlight on the writing table. Being a child for whom anything in the room is fair game, the flashlight was immediately in his hands. As it clicked on, the rays landed upon the language experience chart story developed the day before. He followed the path of the rays, walked up to the chart, and began to read aloud as the light traveled across the page from word to word.

He was thrilled, and in only a matter of seconds his excitement infected the other students in the room. As the other students were drawn to the chart, he continued to read it aloud, with the flashlight moving from left to right and then making the return sweep to the beginning of the next line. The other students began to ask for their turns, and each experimented with this newly discovered procedure. As the teacher watched she saw the potential of this activity for instruction and practice. Tina's turn with the flashlight provided an instructional opportunity.

Tina began to read aloud from the chart, using the flashlight to spotlight the progression of her eyes' movement across the page as she read. When the light reached the end of the first line, the other students and the teacher watched as the light dropped down to the *end* of the next line and began to travel from *right to left*, with the corresponding words being read in reverse order. Naturally, the reading made no sense whatsoever. The line was being read backwards! All of the other readers in the class realized immediately what she had done.

They learned vicariously from her mistake: They saw that reading didn't make sense unless they went back to the beginning of each line. Directionality had just become concrete for them, and during the ensuing student-led discussion of

Tina's actions, the importance of directionality became evident to everyone.

This natural sequence of events describes how flashlight reading can be used in classrooms. A student reads a class-composed chart dictation or big book, using the flashlight to highlight the eyes' movements across the page and the return sweep at the end of each line. Flashlight reading helps build a foundation for many emergent reader concepts, such as one-to-one correspondence and directionality, as well as the concepts of letter, word, and sentence.

Flashlight reading provides a very concrete way for each student to interact with the text. The teacher may guide this interaction, or students may practice reading with the flashlight independently. Flashlight reading facilitates the reading growth of each young reader with ease, and because of its extremely motivating nature, the students find it "just plain fun."

Reading millionaires—It works!

Nancy L. Baumann

VOLUME 48, NUMBER 8, MAY 1995

I am the school librarian at Barnett Shoals Elementary School, a pre-kindergarten through Grade 5 school. Several years ago I felt that my third through fifth graders were not doing as much recreational reading as I had hoped. I tried interesting book displays, book talks, and reading aloud lunch sessions. They were effective, but I still was not satisfied. I believed I needed a reading incentive program to promote recreational reading and to create an interest in reading with my students. I was looking for a program that motivated everyone, not just the students who already were reading. I was also looking for a way to involve parents and caregivers because the program I envisioned was an out-of-school recreational reading initiative. Last of all, I needed a program that didn't cost a lot of money. I wanted students to learn to build a reading habit intrinsically and not just to read for prizes for only a certain length of time.

The Reading Teacher came to the rescue! The May 1991 issue had an article titled "Encouraging Independent Reading Through the Reading Millionaires Project," by Gail O'Masta and James M. Wolf, which described a reading incentive program I felt would work at Barnett Shoals. The Reading Millionaires was a schoolwide program that had students accumulate one million minutes of independent, self-selected reading done out of school. After reading the article several times, I wrote to Mr. Wolf for more information about the Reading Millionaires project. He graciously sent me a project handbook and a video, which enabled me to begin this project at my school in the fall of 1993.

The Reading Millionaire's Club was a huge success at Barnett Shoals. It was well received by teachers and parents. I initiated a few additions to fit the project to my school, for example, a Drop-Everything-and-Read period on Fridays to ensure that all students participated in recreational reading. I also conducted a raffle for a free paperback book every Friday for each grade level. Students entered their names in the raffle by returning their Savings Books, which are the student records for minutes read. This helped keep interest high and reminded students to bring their Savings Books to school on Fridays.

To recognize students and classes that were working hard toward our goal of reading one million minutes, I created the Reading Hall of Fame. The Reading Hall of Fame is located on a wall in the school entry. I wanted all who entered Barnett Shoals to notice what we were trying to accomplish. Individual students could be initiated into the Hall of Fame by reading 500 minutes or more in one week. In addition, five classes were honored weekly for having the most Savings Books returned or greatest number of minutes read that week. A star was displayed for each student or class, stating how many minutes were read or the percentage of students returning Savings Books. Our principal made a point of praising students and classes who were in the Reading Hall of Fame in the daily announcements.

I received a small grant through my school district and parent-teacher organization, which enabled me to purchase Reading Millionaires pennants to honor students for participating in the project. The students received the pennants at the end of the year during a schoolwide assembly. They were also honored by the presence of Lady Dawg and Hairy Dawg, mascots for the University of Georgia, who applauded their achievement. In addition, members of the University's women's basketball team came to Barnett Shoals several times to talk to the children about the importance of reading and learning.

The students and their families read a grand total of 1,230,407 minutes during the 27 weeks that the Reading Millionaire's Club was conducted. The Savings Books revealed that students in kindergarten through fifth grade, plus all the special education classes, read many interesting materials such as *Charlotte's Web*, cereal boxes, *Jennifer Murdley's Toad*, Bible stories and lessons, *Sports Illustrated for Kids*, the local newspaper, Nintendo and Sega instructions, *Ranger Rick*, recipes, and many other books and magazines. The Reading Millionaire's Club has been so successful at Barnett Shoals that I plan to extend it to include our prekindergarten children and their families, as well as the faculty and staff.

We are all dedicated at Barnett Shoals to creating life-long readers! Thank you for publishing such a practical and important idea as the Reading Millionaires Project.

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Active reading through fanny books

Jane Brown
Slenda Haynes

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At first glance it may appear our class is engaged in some kind of scooting relay or train tag, but a closer look reveals that these children are actually reading! They are actively involved in reading *fanny books*, an innovation on the popular large-format books.

When given free reading time, many of our children chose big books to read. They sprawled on the floor, stretched and shifted around others who shared the book, and attempted to position themselves so that they could see the print and illustrations. It became evident that the children enjoyed not only the big print but also the freedom of movement, and of not being confined to a desk or expected to sit still. However, sharing the big book with others who sometimes read faster or slower, or just simply got in the way, presented a problem. As an outgrowth of students' floor reading, fanny books were created. Fanny books take big books one step—or rather, one scoot—further.

We created our fanny books by taking student-created text (such as written retelling of favorite stories or poems) and laying it out on big-book size pages (12" × 18"). Each page has text and illustrations on the top two thirds of the page with a small fanny-sized paper cushion on the bottom one third, as described in the Figure. The pages for these books were laid out on the front sides of the paper and then bound by running them through a laminating machine end to end, beginning with the last page.

The children read by laying books out on the floor and then sitting on the cushion for the first page of the story with their legs stretched out to either side. When they are ready for the next page, the children scoot forward to the next cushion. Another child can follow close behind. When a child reaches the last page of the book, he or she joins the line to scoot and read again, much as children do with the slide on the playground.

The fanny books have generated a great deal of excitement with our children. From creating the stories and drawing the illustrations, to making the cush-

Steps to the successful construction of a fanny book

1. Use lightweight paper about 12" × 18" in size. It is important to use lightweight paper because it is manageable for young children.
2. To begin the construction of the book, turn the paper lengthwise.
3. Construct each page with these three primary components:
   (a) the narrative, which can be original writings or innovations of favorite stories, poems, or rhymes;
   (b) the illustration, which is almost always an original by a child or a small group; and
   (c) the cushion, which can be constructed with a rectangle of paper, scraps of cloth, or wallpaper designed to resemble a seat cushion.
4. Remember that proper placement of the three primary components on the page is critical. The narrative should be in top third, the illustration in the middle third, and the cushion in the bottom third.
5. Place the completed pages of the book in reverse order and laminate them. They should be laminated on a continuous strip with about one inch between each page. This space will allow the book to fold flat when being stored.
6. Stretch the book out over the floor. The children begin their experience with their fanny book by sitting on the cushion part of the title page with their feet on the outside of the book. They use their fingers as pointers while quietly or silently reading the print on each page. They scoot forward to the next page when they are finished. Several children can experience and enjoy the book at the same time.

ions and reading the book, they willingly and actively participate. Involving them from start to finish in the complete bookmaking process fosters feelings of accomplishment and ownership.

The children may think of fanny books as just a fun activity. However, the books also provide a reading and learning experience that is educationally significant. Educators have long acknowledged the irreplaceable value of active learning experiences for all young children (Whitmore & Goodman, 1992), especially for children identified as kinesthetic or tactile learners. Kinesthetic learners learn by experiencing and doing, while tactile learners learn through touching, manipulating, and handling (Weaver, 1988). Fanny books help to meet the needs of all learners by physically immersing them in print.

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"Hello, Mrs. Willman, it's me!" Keep kids reading over the summer by using voice mail

Ann Teresa Willman

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Those of us who were terrified of computers years ago have now had to adapt to the next technological given—voice mail. After a few awkward moments, we've learned to speak to Joyce D. Voice as if she were our best friend. In fact, voice mail is so convenient, it's hard to imagine our lives without it. Communication among our colleagues is now easy, and dare I say, "fun."

As a reading specialist at Rose Tree Elementary School in Media, Pennsylvania, USA, I am usually distressed and anxious in September when I administer my pretests. Why? Because of what I call "backslide," the scores that indicate my children have forgotten how to read well over the long and lazy vacation. Summer programs and incentives are helpful, but there are always those children who just forget. Reading for some kids is not like learning to ride a bike. It might take them up to 6 weeks to get back to where they were in June, which seems like a waste of precious September time.

Last year, I decided to try using the school district's voice mail system to keep children reading over the summer. I wanted a way to keep in touch with my students. I was fortunate enough to receive an instructional improvement grant to purchase three books (two fiction, one nonfiction) for each of my 30 remedial readers. In a letter to parents instructing them on how to use the voice mail system, I carefully detailed how the children could call my mailbox and read to me over the phone. They could either read for 3 minutes or summarize a chapter from their books. Of course, some books would require more than one call.

A great advantage of this program was the freedom my students and I had concerning project time. Since voice mail is available 24 hours a day, a student could choose to call any time, 7 days a week. In addition, he or she could call from any location. One of my first graders said, "I hope it's okay for me to read really fast, Mrs. Willman, but I'm calling from Cape May!" Little

did he know, I too spent some leisurely time at the shore. Although there's a long distance charge for me to access my voice mail from the beach, somehow I didn't mind at all. As I listened from Avalon, New Jersey, to my enthusiastic and expressive readers, it was fun for my husband and children to eavesdrop and enjoy the voices of the children I spoke of so often.

After I received the first voice mail call from each student, I decided it would be a good idea to make a quick call and speak with the child to let him or her know that I was indeed listening to each reading. I felt this gave the children the confidence and incentive to keep calling. I received 92 calls during the 6-week program. Some were stilted, some were carefully practiced, all were entertaining. I kept a little notebook and recorded the dates of the call and the book each child was reading.

An interesting component of the program was the parental feedback in the project. I invited the parents to leave messages telling me how the process was going. I received lots of positive input from parents stating that a school connection made their sometimes reluctant reader more amenable to reading during vacation. An issue that arose, however, was the awkwardness some children felt about speaking on the phone. Some parents expressed concern that their children were not "phone" people. For this reason, I gave the children the option of writing a report for each book and mailing it to my home. I had one child who took advantage of this choice. On the other side of the spectrum was a parent who was completely surprised that her daughter liked talking to a machine—it was conversation with a live person that she dreaded!

My grant also paid for each student to attend a movie at the end of the summer. The reward for participating in the voice mail program was a trip to the theater. The logistics of when, where, and what movie to see were worked out in a mailing to parents, who chaperoned our special event. Those children who were on vacation were given a movie ticket to use at a later date.

During the school year, I have been collecting information and pondering how to make the program better. I sent a survey home to those parents whose children had participated. As a result of those surveys, I plan to make some changes for next summer.

Some of the enhancements I'll try the second time include "practicing" voice mail with my students at school in early June so that the children can begin at a higher comfort level. I may even read to the children on the system's homework hotline. Also, I plan to try for 100% participation as I had four students last year who did not participate at all. In using the homework hotline, I plan to ask questions directly related to the books the children are reading. Students can answer the questions when they call to read.

Thirty children were posttested in June, 1997. I used an informal reading inventory as my summer pretest and tested the children again in September. Of the 26 children who participated in the program, none lost ground, and one actually increased by a half year. I think that keeping a school connection made a difference for these children.

Books and Buddies: Peers tutoring peers

Elizabeth Kreuger
Brenda Braun

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At Sherbrooke Elementary School in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, Canada, the majority of children entering school do not speak English as their first language; furthermore, school is their only exposure to English because the language and culture of the province are French. This means that they must meet the challenge of learning a new language and learning to read simultaneously in the absence of any external support. For many children this twofold task is too great and they fall behind in their first year at school (Kreuger & Townshend, 1997).

The success and effectiveness of peer tutoring to teach reading skills are well documented in the literature (Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1989; Labbo & Teale, 1990; Maheady, Harper, & Mallette, 1991; Topping, 1989; Topping & Whiteley, 1990), and it seemed to be just the technique we were looking for to help boost the reading achievement of our Grades 2 and 3 students. The one-on-one contact of a peer tutor would "nudge" the second-language learner. In addition, it would provide opportunities for engagement in peer interaction and, if structured properly, would also provide opportunities to speak, write, read, and listen to English. The Books and Buddies: Peers Tutoring Peers programme we designed was run in our Grade 2 and Grade 3 classrooms on a daily basis for an entire academic year.

Twenty-two Grade 2 students and 28 Grade 3 students took part in Books and Buddies. Seventy-nine percent of these students spoke a language other than English as their first language with French being the predominant other language. Initial diagnostic testing in September indicated that only 27% (6 of the 22) of the Grade 2 students and 14% (4 of the 28) of the Grade 3 students were reading at or above their respective grade levels. In addition, only 14% (3 of the 22) of the Grade 2 children and 32% (9 of the 28) of the Grade 3 children were spelling at or above their respective grade levels.

The main objective of Books and Buddies was to increase and improve reading

fluency and comprehension among our high ESL population. We hoped that the percentage of children reading at grade level would improve with the implementation of this programme.

Secondary objectives were to provide each child with the opportunity to read and practice English for 30 minutes a day; to provide an atmosphere where children would find reading pleasurable and thereby come to love to read; to train the children in appropriate reading behaviour and reading strategies through miniworkshops so that the peer-tutoring time could be effective; to develop positive social skills, recognizing that children learn best when they feel good about themselves and see themselves as successful (Beane, 1991); to improve the children's spelling skills; to introduce the children to different genres of text; and to improve the children's writing.

Finally, the Books and Buddies programme was a professional objective for us, the participating teachers. After many years of watching the second-language learners struggle with language and reading acquisition concurrently, it was obvious that these students needed help to speed up both of these processes in order to prevent them from lagging behind their first-language peers. The investigation, implementation, and evaluation of various strategies became a personal and professional development project.

Procedures

Books and Buddies: Peers Tutoring Peers is a multifaceted, daily, peer-tutored reading programme. Each Grade 2 student was paired with a Grade 3 tutor. Care was taken to ensure that the reading level of each Grade 3 tutor was at least on par with that of the second grader. The dyads remained constant for a full 10-week term after which time great care was taken in forming the new dyads. Remaining Grade 3 students were paired and employed as substitutes.

The children in both classes were trained in the expected peer-tutoring behaviours through miniworkshops in their home classrooms. During these workshops the children brainstormed lists of "put-ups," or encouragements, which they could use to make their partners feel good. Role-playing and discussion were used to experience and work through appropriate responses to possible situations that could arise, such as a partner isn't listening, isn't sitting properly, or isn't following the proper behaviours.

Academic workshops were held for the Grade 3 students to develop specific tutoring skills. The students compiled a list of reading strategies that they could use while tutoring the Grade 2 students. The strategies included sounding out of words, reading on, looking for a little word in the big word, looking at the picture, and the use of clues such as rhyming words or synonyms. They also practised the use of a 5-second wait before intervening if their partner had difficulty decoding a word. Five Grade 3 students, who were paired with children who were nontext readers, were trained to teach their partner letter sounds.

The dyads were divided into two groups, with half meeting in each home classroom for 30 minutes each day. They followed a structured routine as set out in Figure 1. This daily routine changed every 10 weeks. The children's spelling words varied not only from week to week but from child to child.

In addition to the agenda in Figure 1, the dyads rotated through three different computer programmes in each classroom. The spelling component of *School Mom* (Motes, 1991) was used as well as *Reader Rabbit 1* (1994) and 3 (1994). Each dyad spent 30 minutes a week on one of these programmes.

The buddies wrote letters to each other weekly. The Grade 3 children wrote to their Grade 2 buddy for homework on Tuesday. These letters were read to their buddies during peer-tutoring time on Wednesday. The process was the reverse for Wednesday night and Thursday. The content was usually affirming for the partners because they reiterated in writing what they were doing well. Michael, a Grade 2 student, mentions "Writing letters every Wednesday" in his poem entitled *Reading Buddies* (see Figure 2).

Wordless books were introduced in the third term. The partners took turns making up stories to match the pictures. These stories were rehearsed a number of times, and then each child wrote his or her own story. The stories were often shared daily with their buddies while in the drafting stage.

The children completed two science units entitled Simple Machines and Insects, which were in addition to the regular peer-tutoring time. For the first unit the children were introduced to preselected nonfiction books about machines while simultaneously being taught about the role of science in their lives, the scientific method, and research. The buddies used the books to research simple machines and then design their own machine. They used the scientific method to move their way through the project. After their inventions were completed, they wrote up their process and presented their write-ups and machines at a science fair. The second unit, on insects, began with a bug-collecting field trip. The bugs were used as a catalyst for research and identification in nonfiction insect books and magazines.

A student-made training video was recorded and shown to parents at the Science Fair. In the video the children explained and demonstrated a strategy called paired reading (Topping & Lindsay, 1992). After the fair the children took turns taking the video home for closer parental inspection. The feedback from both parents and children indicated that the video was extremely helpful in increasing their reading time at home.

Special materials and equipment were kept to a minimum. The children self-selected reading materials from the classroom and school library. The three computer programmes, *School Mom* and *Reader Rabbit 1* and *3* were used in both classrooms. In addition, teacher-made games were assembled and used to develop an understanding of long and short vowel sounds. Daily dyad evaluation forms and a teacher-made checklist were developed to evaluate the students' grasp of the

Figure 1
Books and Buddies agenda–Term 4

Monday
1. Say something nice to your buddy.
2. Practise spelling words for 5 minutes. (The children wrote their words on chalkboards, and when difficulty arose the tutor would write the word on the tutee's back while saying the letters.)
3. Grade 3's day to choose a book and read.
4. Each buddy tells his or her favourite part of the book.
5. Each buddy tells the other what he or she did well today.
6. Smile, clean up, and say good-bye.

Tuesday
1. Tell your buddy what he or she did well yesterday.
2. Practise spelling words for 5 minutes.
3. Choose and play one of the teacher-made games for 10 minutes.
4. Clean up.
5. Coread (pair read) a story in your folder.
6. Tell your buddy something that you noticed about his or her reading.
7. Smile and say good-bye.

Wednesday
1. Say something nice to your buddy.
2. Grade 3s read their letter to their buddy. (This was Tuesday night's homework for the Grade 3s.)
3. Practise spelling words for 5 minutes.
4. Grade 2's day to choose a book and read.
5. Ask each other questions about the story.
6. Find four words to add to the spelling sheet. This sheet varied from week to week; one week the children were looking for all the different ways the long a was represented in words.
7. Tell your buddy something you noticed about his or her behaviour.
8. Smile and say good-bye.

Thursday
1. Say something nice to your buddy.
2. Write two sentences each using two of your spelling words.
3. Grade 2s read their letter to their buddy. (This was Grade 2's Wednesday night's homework.)
4. Grade 3's day to choose a book and read.
5. Ask your buddy who the characters were and what the setting was. Ask your buddy to retell the story in his or her own words.
6. Tell your buddy something you noticed that he or she did that helped you be good buddies today.
7. Smile and say good-bye.

Friday
1. Tell your buddy something you like about him or her. (I like the way you...)
2. Practise your spelling words; cross off the words you had right all week.
3. Grade 2's day to choose a book and read.
4. Each buddy should make up a new ending for the story.
5. Tell your buddy what you thought the most important part of the book was and why.
6. Say good-bye and have a good weekend.

Figure 2
Michael's poem

Reading buddies
by
Michael
Working hard at words and
reading,
Listening to each other when we
are reading,
Grades 2 and 3 reading, writing
and spelling,
Being nice to each other.
Writing letters every
Wednesday,
Having fun every day,
Happiness is friendship smiles,
Reading nicely to each other,
Friendship in your heart.

identified skills each week. Each dyad had a folder which contained their evaluation forms, blank paper, game checklist, and spelling words.

Results

Reading achievement was pretested in September and posttested in June with the *Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty Oral Reading* subtest. Spelling achievement was pre- and posttested using the *Wide Range Achievement Test 3* (1993). In addition, the children were videotaped in the process of peer tutoring and asked to evaluate the behaviours they saw. The children participated in oral discussion as well as wrote a reflective response in their journals (Figure 3). The teacher observation checklist was used to observe and evaluate how well the children were using the targeted behaviours, and daily dyad evaluation forms were used to assess the enjoyment of the children and to help the children focus on the skills that they were finding effective and future goals to work toward.

From the statistical analysis of the data, the gains made by the children were impressive. The Grade 2 students, on average, showed a gain of 1.5 years in reading fluency and comprehension. Twenty-seven percent of the second graders read at grade level on the pretest, while the posttest showed 55% at grade level. The Grade 3 students, on average, showed a gain of 1.65 years in reading fluency and comprehension. The percent of Grade 3 students reading at grade level increased from 14% to 61% over the course of the programme.

The gains in spelling skills were just as impressive. The second graders started the year with 14% spelling at level, and the third graders had 32% at level. By June, 55% of the second graders and 46% of the third graders were spelling at level with an overall average gain of 1.45 years for the second graders and 1.54 years for the third graders.

Although not measured statistically, all the other secondary objectives also showed positive gains. The children had the opportunity to read and practice their English in a one-on-one situation for 30 minutes every day. The "buzz" in each classroom at buddy time and the high level of student "on task" behaviour were good indications of the amount of practising going on. In addition, Books and Buddies did provide an atmosphere where the

Figure 3
Children's reflective writing

I like games and my reading buddie too her name is marie Lyne we like eachother I think we did will at feaching together. We will do better at writing. We take teach other and practest the words. We like playing wich kind of game we guse. My reading buddie always take an easy book or a chapter. She's dificall to read a book but she will practiest reading We like bute at doing is the page of what will improve we always do will at writing the words for spelling. When we went at the coputher we did the spelling on the cuputher. I think we did a good jud.

Oct 22

We wer nuves aput the movy
And I sead don't look at
The scenes like in a will movy
And it was fun with my buddy
Becaus we all redy know ich other
Becaus she had doss to us some
Time she don't leen to me and
So I gat agry at her but I dit
Scrm at her I ches told her To
leern.

At first I did't like it Naw I like it aspsly when I get on esy interesting book to read. I thiek we have a feew things to wrok on. Like puting the book in the witl. CHOSING HRDER BOOKS that gose to my prontiner. Allso when I Read she needs to stop trning ardwrd.

Oct 22, 1996

Reading Buddies

I always like reading buddy because we learn alot how to read And how to spell the words propelly We are most good at playing game because me and Catheine we practis the games. my reading buddy likes and I like her to. We like to play vowel Tennis Cathrine practis alot She is gooder than me. The End

love of reading could develop. Several parents wrote notes attesting to their child's increased enjoyment of reading. Three children in the Grade 2 class saved their lunch change to buy books and started their own reading club. The children in both classes worked hard all year at developing positive social skills by negotiating, encouraging, and praising their buddies and by constructive criticism and self-evaluation. Finally, the two science units satisfied the objective of introducing the children to different genres of text. Both the simple machines unit and the insect unit were hits with the children.

Conclusion

The problem of how to help second-language learners keep pace with their peers has been a problem for many years. Lack of resources, funding, and personnel has contributed to our feeling of hopelessness and helplessness. With the implementation of Books and Buddies in our classrooms this year, the children have made a huge step in repairing the damage done when the needs of second-language learners are not addressed. Part of the solution to the ongoing problem of helping these students keep pace with their peers has been right under our noses—the students themselves. Daily peer tutoring is an effective teaching practise in the ESL classroom. It provides the much needed individual attention that is so difficult to deliver in a regular classroom. The children have sustained time to read and discuss. They receive immediate feedback or help as they need it. Unlike individual silent reading time, it is easy for the children to assess their comprehension and find help with difficult words through their tutor. The teacher can be assured that every child is reading.

Books and Buddies has been an exciting journey for both the teachers and the children; it is an extremely effective way to help ESL children on the road to reading fluency and comprehension, while simultaneously raising self-esteem. The project evolved as the year progressed to meet the needs of the children. The success was greater than either teacher had envisioned at the outset. The children not only taught one another, but also taught the teachers how children learn to read. Each child had the undivided attention of a peer tutor every day as he or she read, spelled, questioned, and answered and then received affirmation and encouragement for his or her effort and skills. What better way can there be to enhance the teacher/student ratio than by enlisting the help of 30 peer tutors?

Authors' note

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"I'm here to help—what do you want me to do?": A primer for literacy tutors

Carol J. Hopkins

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Volunteers are visible in many school environments as they assist teachers with nonacademic tasks such as taking attendance, photocopying, grading, and assisting with playground and lunch duty. While these efforts are highly valued, volunteers seldom participate regularly in activities that contribute directly to children's growth toward becoming skilled, strategic readers. Lack of volunteer training, limited time for teacher and volunteer interactions, and inconsistent volunteer schedules are among the reasons volunteer roles may be limited. However, schools need to find ways to redirect volunteer efforts toward working with children as they engage in literacy activities. Thus, the purpose of this article is to identify literacy activities that can be used by volunteers to support classroom instruction and to provide a set of guidelines that teachers may give to the volunteers who work with their students in need of additional educational opportunities if they are to meet the challenge of becoming successful, independent readers.

The literacy activities were selected for several reasons. First, they require volunteers to work directly with children to support their developing literacy abilities. Second, these activities provide children with increased opportunities to engage in literate practices. At the same time, these activities were selected with the goal of circumventing problems associated with programs that require extensive volunteer training and supervision. Finally, these activities were selected because they reflect research-supported instructional practices.

Guidelines for tutors

Ultimately, the classroom teacher is responsible for determining the most effective match between individual students' needs and the activities conducted by literacy tutors. However, instead of using tutors to help children complete specific assignments, it may be more useful to identify general kinds of supportive literacy experiences that volunteers can provide. Mar-

garet Mooney's (1990) categorization of literacy experiences appears to be a useful framework for organizing volunteer tutor activities. That is, volunteers can read to children, they can read with children, and they can support reading by children. In the following sections, I will describe activities in each of these categories that meet the selection criteria stated above and provide instructional guidelines that tutors may follow before, during, and after teaching the lesson. *All activities are based on the assumption that the classroom teacher has identified the books and other literacy materials the tutor will use rather than expecting the tutor to select appropriate instructional resources.*

Reading to children. There are many benefits associated with reading aloud (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Mooney, 1990; Trelease, 1989). Read-alouds showcase reading as a pleasurable activity, develop positive attitudes toward reading, expose children to the sounds and rhythm of language, develop children's understanding of how stories are constructed, show models of good reading, provide exposure to printed language, promote vocabulary development, entertain listeners, and develop children's appreciation for literature that could not be gained through their own reading abilities. The following guidelines are recommended for volunteers as they read to children.

Before reading aloud:

- Without the children present, read the book aloud to practice pronunciation, pacing, and character voices.
- Think about what you will say to introduce the book to your audience. Decide how you might connect the story to the listeners' life experiences.
- Think about what you will emphasize during the read-aloud.
- When students are present, engage them in discussion about the title and cover of the book.
- Ask students to make predictions about what they think the book is about or what will happen in the story.
- If appropriate, take a picture walk through the book to anticipate what the story will be about, to introduce main characters, and to talk about the setting of the story.

While reading aloud:

- Hold the book so that you and your listeners can see the pictures.
- Read with good expression—use your voice to draw children into the story and make frequent eye contact with your listeners.
- Adjust your pace as you read to give listeners time to build mental pictures and to think about what you are reading.
- Encourage and acknowledge listener responses during the reading. Provide explanations for things that children may not understand as you are reading. This may require you to rephrase parts of the text.

After reading aloud:

- Revisit predictions that children made prior to reading the story. Have students talk about places in the story where their predictions were accurate, and places

where they realized they had to change their predictions.

• Talk with children about connections between their lives and events in the book.

• Discuss favorite/interesting/unfamiliar/difficult parts of the book.

Reading with children. Sharing reading with children has been demonstrated to be an effective means of engaging children as participants in read-aloud experiences (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Holdaway, 1979; Manning & Fennacy, 1993; Mooney, 1995). While reading to children provides opportunities for them to enjoy and think about a story read by someone else, during shared reading activities children are invited to collaborate with the teacher and other group members during the actual reading of a text with enlarged print.

In addition to creating the desire to read through participation in an enjoyable, nonthreatening social activity, other advantages of shared reading activities include children's exposure to the modeling of extended text reading, the development of concepts about print, the development of vocabulary knowledge, the opportunity to behave like a reader, and guided and supported group participation in which no child is singled out or made to risk failure or embarrassment.

Two common activities related to reading with children that may be led by volunteer tutors are shared book reading and the creation of language experience stories. In both cases, the tutor points to each word in the enlarged text of a Big Book or chart as it is read aloud by the tutor and all members of the group so that young readers are shown that the words spoken by the reader come from a specific place in the text. Procedures for leading shared reading and language experience lessons include the following activities.

Shared book reading

Before beginning shared book reading:

• Build the children's interest in reading the book through an introduction of the story to be read.

• Discuss the title of the book and the cover illustrations.

• Encourage children to make predictions about the content of the story.

• Whenever possible, help children draw on their own experiences in order to make connections that may help them understand the story to be read.

During shared book reading:

• Read the entire selection to the children, pointing to each word on the enlarged chart or Big Book page while saying it. It is critical that all children be able to see the print.

• After the first reading, invite students' comments about the story.

• Following the discussion of the story, reread the selection, again pointing to each word as it is read. This time, however, invite children to join in the reading.

• During this group oral reading, the teacher again serves as a guide or model, and students join in the reading of words

and phrases as they recognize them. At no time does the teacher call attention to individual children's reading or make corrections.

- After several group readings of the story, poem, or book, children may be invited to point out particular words or to match word cards to the text.
- The tutor may also stop periodically throughout the story to ask questions, reread parts, or discuss word meanings to emphasize that reading is supposed to be meaningful.

After shared book reading:

- Make materials read during shared readings available in the classroom for students' later use.
- Encourage students to take home individual copies of the reading selection for additional shared readings with family members or friends. Family members should be informed of the purposes of shared reading and realize that they should not expect children to be able to read these materials independently or with complete accuracy.

Language experience stories

Stories told by students about persons, places, things, and experiences that are familiar to them are the foundation of the language experience approach. After these stories are written down by the tutor, students read them aloud in unison with others just as they do during other shared reading activities. Student-dictated stories that are based on learners' language and personal experiences are handwritten on large charts to create personalized reading materials that help show readers the relationship between spoken and written language (Ashton-Warner, 1963; Hall, 1981; Holdaway, 1979). Among the advantages of using language experience stories are that children are able to conceptualize reading as "talk written down," the material to be read is motivating and comprehensible because it is based on children's own lived experiences, and these stories stress the relationship between reading and writing. Students can read what is written down because it is their story and they know what it says. The following procedures lead to the creation of language experience activities.

Before writing language experience stories:

- With children's help, identify an important or meaningful experience in students' lives.
- Once a story topic has been identified, talk about the event and brainstorm what students might wish to include in a story.
- Talk about how the ideas students wish to include in the story might be organized.

During the writing and reading of language experience stories:

- Record the story as the students dictate it. It is important to show children through verbal and nonverbal responses

that their ideas and language are valued, and that they are being recorded exactly as the children say them.

- When taking dictation, repeat each sentence the children suggest before writing it.
- Say each word aloud before writing it, inviting children to provide letters that represent sounds they know.
- Read each sentence as it is completed and ask children to check it for accuracy. Also invite children to join in reading each sentence as it is written.
- Finally, when the entire text has been completed, read it aloud while pointing to each word as you say it. Encourage children to join in the reading of the text, but do not single out any child from the group.

After writing and reading language experience stories:

- Completed language experience stories should be displayed in the classroom so that students may reread and/or illustrate them.
- It is recommended that the tutor prepare and duplicate copies of the story for students who participated in creating it so that they may reread it at a future time. Combs (1996) suggests several activities to use with the duplicated copies of the story such as leaving room for students to illustrate the text. She also suggests a word match activity, which involves providing a copy of the text printed on the top of the page and word cards containing selected words from the text to be cut off from the bottom of the page and then matched to the story. In another activity, students might cut apart sentences from the text and reassemble them into a complete text.

Reading by children. In many instances, reading by children is considered synonymous with guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Mooney, 1990, 1995), a practice in which teachers guide children through the initial reading of materials, which could provide too many challenges for them if they were unassisted. During guided reading, teachers assist children in developing reading strategies that will move them toward independent reading. Given the teaching expertise and knowledge of individual students' reading behaviors required to provide effective instruction, guided reading is not an appropriate activity for volunteer tutors to engage in as they assist in classroom reading programs.

This is not to say, however, that volunteer tutors cannot or should not participate in activities in which students read independently. For instance, a volunteer may be the audience for a child who wishes to reread a familiar story aloud. Tutors can also contribute greatly to Readers Theatre productions, dramatization activities, and choral reading performances, all of which are effective strategies for developing children's oral reading fluency through repeated readings (Reutzel & Cooter, 1996). In each of these activities, the volunteer tutor can assist students as they practice reading scripts that have been prepared in advance by the students and/or classroom teacher. Rehearsing parts, encouraging students to read with expression, and preparing for a final per-

formance before an audience require virtually no advanced preparation by the volunteer tutor, but provide immense benefits to the students while simultaneously freeing the classroom teacher for other instructional responsibilities.

There are many ways in which volunteer tutors can be used to support literacy teaching and learning. I have attempted to identify ways in which tutors can work directly with children in literacy activities that have identifiable instructional benefits and that also do not require specialized training, advanced preparation or planning, or constant supervision by the classroom teacher. As Allington (1977) reminded us, children get better at reading by reading. The activities presented here provide opportunities for children to engage with print as volunteer literacy tutors read to children, read with children, and listen to reading done by children.

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Reading Buddies: A first-grade intervention program

Carol Caserta-Henry

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Abbey's favorite part of Reading Buddies is when her tutor, Dana, lets her pick out the new book they will read together. Abbey loves the time she spends working with Dana 3 days a week. Having someone read, write, and do word study with her makes her feel special and important.

Jerrica, who hardly spoke to her tutor, Tina, at first, now chatters animatedly with Tina and discusses what she wants to write in her journal today.

Tyler likes to sort his words from his word bank and make Dana guess how he sorted his words. He grins from ear to ear as she studies the words.

Tiffany, who struggles with reading activities in class, delightedly and fluently reads a book she has read several times before. She copies the way her tutor, Lindy, reads with expression.

October: Designing our program

All of these students participated in the Reading Buddies program at our school. The idea of using high school students as tutors was originally conceived by Ken Henry, a high school counselor, and me, a reading specialist. I then took this idea to a meeting with Jim Barclay, my principal; Donald Bear and Shane Templeton, professors from the University of Nevada; and Kathy Freeman, a nearby high school administrator. The meeting was called to see what sort of collaboration could come about among the elementary school, the high school, and the university to help first graders who were at risk of failure in reading.

There were many potential benefits from this collaboration. High school students would have the opportunity to find out if they enjoyed working with young children and if teaching might be a potential career. Moreover, the high school students would get valuable experience in teaching reading, writing, and spelling. First graders would receive one-on-one tutoring, which has been found to be one of the most successful formats for working with students at risk of early reading failure (Wasik & Slavin, 1993).

In planning the Reading Buddies project, we wanted to create a situation that would address the first graders' needs and provide a positive learning experience for the high school tutors. We wanted the first graders to have one-on-one tutoring in reading, writing, and word study. We wanted the high school students to understand the developmental synchrony among reading, writing, and spelling and to apply this knowledge in their teaching of beginning readers (Bear, 1991).

The basic tutoring format we developed consisted of the following activities:

1. Reading a new book each week that was predictable and easy.

2. Rereading a familiar story from the previous week.

3. Writing in a journal at least twice a week.

4. Doing word study activities once or twice a week.

As time went on and the tutors became more knowledgeable about tutoring we added the following support materials and activities: word banks, personal readers, directed reading-listening activities, and developmental spelling assessment.

November: Getting started

The selection of the first-grade students to participate in this program was based upon their performance on the spelling by stage assessment (Bear & Barone, 1989), an informal test of early word knowledge, a concept of word assessment (Henderson & Templeton, 1986; Morris, 1992, 1993), and referral by classroom teachers.

The students selected for the program were perceived by their teachers to be significantly behind in their reading, writing, and spelling development. These students were beginning to experience frustration, and, as a result, their interest in literacy activities was waning.

The 11 boys and 5 girls had a rudimentary concept of word and were mainly at the letter name stage of spelling development (see Table). Because reading, writing, and spelling develop in synchrony, this stage corresponds to a beginning reader who has a rudimentary concept of word.

When the project was described to potential tutors from the local high school, 28 students were eager to participate. Tutor selection was based on student interest in the program and willingness to make a 7-month commitment. They also were required to participate in ongoing training during the year.

Tutors were given a copy of *Guidelines for Community Volunteer Reading Tutors* (Johnston, Juel, & Invernizzi, 1995) to read before the training started. This booklet was created to help tutors who were working with beginning readers with the McGuffey Reading Center at the University of Virginia. The guidelines gave information on how to read new material, how to reread familiar material, how to conduct word study activities, and how to encourage writing among beginning readers.

Nine tutors participated in three 2-hour training sessions provided by the university professors. This initial training focused on successful reading practices.

Tutors were also taught how to read with a beginning reader, the importance of journal writing, and how invented spelling fits into writing and word study.

In the third session the tutors met with me for 2 hours to discuss the details of the Reading Buddies program. Tutors were assigned two first-grade students. They put together a folder for each student that included writing journals; examples of how to write D'Nealian letters; alphabet chart; sound board sheets for consonants, vowels, blends, and digraphs; lesson plan sheets; chart to list all books read; chart for keeping track of what letters each child knew (both uppercase and lowercase); and paper for listing all words in each student's word bank.

We discussed how to write lesson plans and how to keep a personal journal reflecting on what the tutors were doing with the first graders. We also previewed materials that they would be using during the year. We decided that the tutors would work with their buddies 3 consecutive days each week followed by a staff meeting on the fourth day.

The tutors worked with each of their buddies for 15 minutes each tutoring day in the cafeteria. During the first meeting the tutors got to know their buddies and read a story to them. This initial interaction established a rapport between the tutors and their buddies.

December–January: Tutoring begins

Tutors started to work with their buddies individually during the first week of December. The first graders wanted to please their tutors, and so they were willing to do literacy activities with their tutors that they might have been more reluctant to do in the classroom. The tutors wanted to help their buddies succeed and were motivated to further their own knowledge about ways to help them. They even spent part of their December vacation making games that would reinforce their buddies' knowledge of words and word families.

February–March: Learning more about our students

During the weekly staff meetings we continued to explore how children learn to read. In February, the tutors administered the developmental spelling test and we showed them how to interpret it. The tutors were thrilled by the progress they saw in their buddies since December. For those who were not making progress, we were able to identify factors that were affecting their learning, such as family problems and possible learning difficulties.

Children comprehend more when new information is related to information that they already know. Tutors were taught Directed Listening-Thinking Activity (DLTAs). DLTAs helped students get more involved in the stories that were read to them.

Time was also spent teaching the tutors how to assess children's developmental spelling, how to deal with behavior problems, confidentiality, and low self-esteem in

a positive way. Tutors learned strategies to use with their buddies to improve their attitudes about reading and writing.

April–May: Personal readers

As the tutors continued to work through April and May, we introduced them to personal readers. Personal readers are notebooks to be read by the first graders to parents, siblings, stuffed animals, or anyone else who would listen. The readers included copies of stories the children had reread and were familiar with, language experience stories they had composed, and simple poems they had memorized.

The tutors immediately started typing the stories and poems that they had read with their buddies, so that these stories could go in their personal readers to be read at home. The tutors gave students positive feedback for taking their readers home, reading them, and bringing them back the next day.

Tutor training continued with various literacy activities such as language experience activities. Students shared an experience like eating cookie dough. Then they talked about the experience, and their sentences were written on a chart and read. Individual copies were typed and put in each student's personal reader to be taken home and reread.

Tutors learned how to harvest words for word banks from familiar stories by choosing words the student could easily identify. The words were then written on cards and put into the word bank. If a particular word was forgotten the child could refer back to the text from which it was harvested and reread that text thus seeing the word once again in context. The number of words that a child had in his/her word bank was charted on a thermometer. These words helped to build sight vocabulary and could be used later in word study.

Word study activities included rereading words and sorting them according to initial or final consonant sounds or vowel sounds. Words could also be sorted by word families or similarities in spelling patterns. The first graders would sort words and see if their high school buddy could figure out what was used as the sorting criteria.

The words from the word bank were also used in games such as alphabetizing the words on a long alphabet strip on the floor and reading the words as they were put under the correct letter. Another popular activity was finding words from the word bank that a child really liked and putting these into a story of their own. The children also enjoyed finding words from a particular word family and making them into a flip book. For example, they would find all the one syllable words in their word bank that ended in *-at*. They could then make a flip book where the first letter changed but the *-at* remained the same. (Bear, Inverizzi, & Templeton, in press).

Assessment

The final assessment occurred at the end of May (see Table). The results were

Spelling by stage assessment scores

Buddy names:	November	February	May
Adam A.	3	7	7
Daniel	4	6	6
Howie	4	6	6
Caleb	4	5	6
Jesse	2	5	6
Scott	2	5	5
Christina	5	6	6–7
Abbey	2	6	6–7
Mike	2	6	6
Adolpho	4	6	6
Jacob	2	4	6–7
Jerrica	1	2	4
Tiffany	1	2	4
Adam B.	2	3	5
Joel	3	5	5–6
Nicole	5	6	6–7

On a scale from 1–15 these numbers represent the stage of development for each child at different times of the year as evaluated by the spelling by stage assessment (Bear & Barone, 1989; Bear, Inverizzi, & Templeton, in press). These stages correspond to development in reading growth as well.

Level 1: Preliterate (uses pretend writing)

Levels 2–3: Early letter name (spells key sounds and beginning and ending consonants)

Levels 4–6: Letter name (uses vowels in each syllable; adds blends and digraphs, begins spelling short vowel words correctly)

Levels 7–9: Within word pattern (spells short vowels correctly and experiments with long vowels)

Levels 10–12: Syllable juncture (learns how syllables fit together; adds prefixes and suffixes)

Levels 13–15: Derivational constancy (learns derived forms in bases and roots)

encouraging. Of the 16 students who had originally started the program, all had demonstrated growth based on their developmental spelling tests, writing samples, and teacher observations. More importantly, all of the first graders had a more positive attitude towards reading and felt better about themselves as read-

ers and writers. They were also more willing and eager to attempt reading tasks. Here are some first graders' comments:

"It's cool to have a reading buddy. It is helping me a lot!"

"I like reading with Lindy. At first I had big letters that were messy and now I have good letters [when I write]."

"It's helping me to read a lot better. My buddy is so nice! I think I'm writing better on my boardwork."

The tutors grew a lot as well. Not only were they willing to do extra things to help their buddies succeed, such as talking to the classroom teachers and learning about ways to make their tutoring more effective, they also stood by their commitment to stay with the program for the year. Some even made special arrangements with their coaches so that their participation in sports would not interfere with their tutoring schedule.

The tutors also used this experience to determine if they might want to be teachers. Two tutors made this decision based on their work in the reading buddies program. Two tutors were hired for a summer literacy program as paid aides because of the training they had received during the year. They were paid extra because they were able to contribute to the training of the other aides.

Here's what two of the tutors thought about the program:

"Due to Reading Buddies I have pretty much made up my mind about becoming a teacher. I loved working with the kids. I felt so much joy when I saw my kids' eyes light up because they understood or because they weren't struggling anymore. I've truly enjoyed this program. It should be started in every elementary school in the United States!"

"Teaching was never something I really wanted to do, but now I have so much more respect for teachers. I know that whatever job I choose it will have to have something to do with kids!"

Based on feedback from the seven classroom teachers involved in the program, we have decided to continue it. All of the teachers felt that their first graders benefited from Reading Buddies, and they wanted to see it expanded so that it started earlier in the year and involved more students.

"Our students in this program have shown growth in their reading and writing efforts....It has been such a boost to the self-esteem of these youngsters. This program has boosted the morale, esteem, and reading levels of the students who have been involved."

Parents were very pleased with the progress they saw in their children as well.

"Tiffany benefited from the reading buddy so much! She not only met a new friend, she now enjoys reading on her own. Tiffany looks forward to the days she and her buddy are together. We are just amazed to see such progress!"

"Adam loves to read now. He gets a big smile on his face when he reads stories to the family. Adam tries to read everything now even if it is above his level. He likes to write stories and loves us to read them."

For me, the program was worth the time and energy it required. Each time I saw the high school students working with their buddies and making a difference, my belief in the program and in the value of kids teaching kids was reaffirmed!

We know that working with kids one on one can have a significant impact on learning. A program such as ours can be developed and coordinated using high school students, parent volunteers, or other volunteers. The cost is minimal, and the benefits are priceless.

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Parents, buddy journals, and reader response

Pamela Klobukowski

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Over the past few years I have used reading logs as a way of encouraging my third-grade students to respond personally to their reading. The children wrote in their logs for homework each day, and I responded to their comments once a week. The students found it easy to summarize what they were reading, yet no matter how I suggested and prodded, it was difficult for them to give up summarizing and really delve into what they thought and felt about what they were reading. The reading logs were not accomplishing my purpose and were becoming drudgery for the students.

After reading an article about buddy journals (Gillespie, 1993) I decided to try them with my students. The students were paired and asked to respond in writing to each other about novels, books, magazines, or ideas we had shared in class. Some responses were short and cursory, but I did find each child making at least one in-depth comment about what had been read. Summarization was avoided because students already knew the story.

I decided to take this one step further by including parents in the process. I asked parents to read books with their children and then write in the buddy journals. The books could be read orally together, silently by each, or whatever combination fit the needs of the student. I asked that the parents and students respond five times to each other about the book they had chosen to read.

The results of this assignment far exceeded my expectations. I found the parents were wonderful models of what good readers do. The children's responses to their parents were much more open, and they easily followed the lead of their parents and were able to make more in-depth responses to what they read.

The parents easily related what happened to the book characters, to themselves, and to their families, and helped the children see these connections.

> Parent: She [Ramona] reminds me of you in some ways. You both have so much energy and also worry about so many things. (Cleary, 1977)

Child: I do not worry so much; well maybe I worry a little.

Parent: Do they [book characters] remind you of yourself and your sister when you argue over things like, "You took my seat!" or "Were you in my room touching my things?" (Cretan, 1993)

Child: Well yes, the two kids do remind me of me and Caroline, but they don't do the same things that me and Caroline do.

Both parents and children were able to identify with the feelings of the characters and were also able to share what each thought the characters should do.

Parent: I like the way Ramona is able to describe how she feels. Sometimes parents and adults are so caught up in the things they are doing that children get less time. (Cleary, 1977)

Child: Ramona really worried about her dad. I think she should really tell him how she feels, don't you?

Parent: You're right, they [Beezus and Ramona] should talk to him. They could tell him what they know about smoking, why they want him to stop, and that they'd try to help him. But remember we talked about how each person is responsible for themselves and sometimes we don't agree with their decisions, but they have a right to their decision.

Parents supported their ideas with examples and helped the children see details.

Parent: I enjoyed the beginning of the story as well, especially the part when Anya's father describes the sea's movements as long, slow breaths. The illustrations were very detailed; I wanted to look at them a lot, especially the picture with all the different whales coming to help the mother and calf. (Allen, 1992)

Parents also helped their children find information in the text and clarify any misunderstandings.

Child: What state do you think Ramona lives in? As for me I need more facts. (Cleary, 1977)

Parent: I think Ramona is from Oregon because when they drew the long picture Ramona said, "How about the state of Oregon?" when they were thinking of what to draw. I think her home state would be what she knew best to draw about.

Parents challenged their children to look beyond the text.

Parent: In *A Christmas Carol* what kind of feelings did the Ghosts of Christmas Present and Christmas Future awaken in Scrooge, and how did they make him change?

Child: When the three spirits showed Scrooge how other people loved Christmas, Scrooge wanted to be like the other people. Don't you think so?... What made him so lonely when he was a child?

Parents expanded upon what the children had written and thus modeled how to reach beyond the text to see the author's purpose.

Child: I think the queen was unfair to everybody because she had a very cruel heart. Do you think she had a cruel heart? (Banks, 1993)

Parent: I am not convinced that the queen had a truly "cruel heart," though she sure was very nasty to everyone. She was, as the title indicates, just terribly spoiled and acted that way because nobody ever corrected her or taught her how to behave in a different manner. As soon as the magic hare showed her that the words "please" and "thank you" can really make a difference in our relationships with others, the queen changed and became a kind and understanding monarch.

Affirmation and positive reinforcement was given freely.

Child: I liked how the hare kept saying to the girl to get some vegetables from the garden because he wanted her to become brave. (Banks, 1993)

Parent: Yes, the idea of sending the girl to get more vegetables for the stew pot was very clever. It forced her to go beyond the shelter of her own home and face the world that she feared. With his magical powers, the hare was able to show the orphan that what we do not know *can* be very exciting and interesting.

Parents and children were able to share humor in their responses.

Parent: What do you think Ramona might do during school review time rather than doodle? (Cleary, 1977)

Child: Of course Ramona will do more in review time than DOODLE (draws a doodle). Oops! Sorry. Anyhow, that was only that one time. (draws a doodle) Right?

Parents liked it

As a culmination to this project I asked the children and parents to tell what they liked and didn't like about the assignment. The comments were very positive. I had been concerned about asking overburdened parents to add one more activity to their already busy schedules. Some parents commented that it was difficult to find the time to do the assignment, but they really enjoyed the time spent with their children.

Parent: I liked writing to you because it was nice to share what we thought about the book. We get so busy and don't have time to talk about such things. I like to hear what you think.

Even though time was at a premium for many parents they still found the activity worthwhile.

Parent: I have enjoyed this "Buddy Journal" exercise. It was "hard" work for us...amidst the holiday celebrations and family gatherings.... I think this is a worthwhile exercise although I had to dredge up my rusty literary skills. We both enjoyed the exercise.

One parent's response to her child really modeled what I had hoped would be achieved by the project.

Parent: When I picked up *Joey's Head* (Cretan, 1993) to read, I thought I would be bored. But do you know what? As I read each page I began to try and guess what was going to happen. You know books have really changed since I was a kid. We used to read fairy tales. Now you can read fun stuff. The book was about two ordinary little boys up to a lot of mischief. The language was easy, but at the same time it was not "babyish." Don't you feel great when you choose a book and it turns out to be a good read? Do you ever find it hard to put a book away unless it's time for sleep? That's the sign of a very good book. You know it's OK not to finish a book if you don't find it interesting. It's the same as TV—if you don't like it, don't read it. There are millions and trillions of books out there that you will love. Maybe some day you can write one for someone else to read.

The children also valued the time spent with their parents. There were many nods of agreement when one child mentioned how it had given him and his dad time together. The children felt free to ask their parents about things they didn't understand and enjoyed the challenge of responding to their parents' comments.

This activity is a nonthreatening way for parents and children to interact. Often homework leads to tension and discord between parents and children. By including both parents and children in the assignment, conflicts were dissipated as they responded to each other as readers and writers.

Parents naturally responded to the books by making predictions, connecting episodes in the books to their family lives, expanding on the ideas of the author, and suggesting what they would do as the character or author. They are natural teachers for their children and, in partnership with teachers, can do much to help their children reach their literacy goals.

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Reading coaches: An alternative to reading tutors

Barbara A. Wasik

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In a recent *The Reading Teacher* article (Wasik, 1998b), I outlined eight guidelines that schools can follow to implement a volunteer tutoring program. These guidelines were developed based on four effective tutoring programs: Reading Recovery, Success for All, the Howard Street Tutoring program, and Book Buddies. The guidelines are as follows: (a) a certified reading specialist needs to supervise tutors, (b) tutors need ongoing training and feedback, (c) tutoring sessions need to be structured and contain basic elements, (d) tutoring needs to be intensive and consistent, (e) quality materials are needed to facilitate the tutoring model, (f) assessment of students needs to be ongoing, (g) schools need to find ways to ensure that tutors will attend regularly, and (h) tutoring needs to be coordinated with classroom instruction. These guidelines were intended to be useful in designing volunteer programs that will result in literacy improvement in children.

In many situations, it is impractical for schools to create programs anything like those anticipated in these guidelines. Resources for supervision, training, and follow-up are often lacking. However, one-to-one tutoring is not the only role volunteers can play in order to affect the literacy development of young children. For schools that do not have the resources to implement a quality tutoring program, volunteers can facilitate literacy development in other ways. As reading coaches, volunteers can provide literacy enrichment experiences for children without emphasizing the diagnostic and intervention aspects of reading. A description of reading coaches and how they can help with literacy development in schools is presented in the following sections.

Defining terms

There is a distinction between reading tutors and reading coaches (Wasik, 1998a). Clarifying the distinct roles of tutors and reading coaches will help in setting appropriate goals and expectations for each role and also in defining the parameters of these roles to help volunteers meet their goals and expectations.

Tutors are intended to play a central role in instruction. This was what Bloom (1984) had in mind when he described tutoring as the most effective form of instruction. This is not to say that volunteer reading tutors take the place of teachers. Teachers often provide guidance to their tutors with regard to the types of activities or concepts the tutor needs to work on with a child. In a one-to-one tutoring session, the tutor typically assesses the skills of the child and helps the child develop strategies to learn to read. The skilled tutor provides constructive feedback and helps the child develop strategies to figure out words in order to read independently. The tutor also understands the student's strengths and weaknesses and understands how the child acquires information. In order to do this effectively, the tutor needs to have some knowledge of how to assess reading difficulties (Juel, 1996). Essentially, what the tutor needs in order to be effective is some expert knowledge of the subject matter and knowledge of effective methods of communicating this knowledge to the student.

Coaching differs from tutoring. Coaching can support children's literacy learning without focusing on direct instruction of reading. Reading coaches can model good reading behavior and provide opportunities for children to read. Unlike tutors, coaches are not expected to diagnose and assess students' reading problems and therefore are not expected to provide a specific intervention. Instead, reading coaches can provide opportunities for children to have one-to-one literacy experiences with a caring adult. This can be a valuable experience, especially for children who have minimal reading opportunities available at home.

Redefining the expectations for volunteers also redefines the goals. Instead of focusing on teaching children to read, reading coaches can broaden children's literacy experiences. Learning to read involves more than just being able to decode and identify words. It also involves comprehension processes. Much of how children learn to understand what is read to them comes from repeated experiences with being read to and having opportunities to ask questions about what was read (Morrow, 1997). Often, children with limited literacy experiences have not had opportunities to listen to the rich language of stories, think about the meaning of the story, or ask questions about aspects of the story that they did not understand.

Activities for reading coaches

What can volunteer reading coaches offer schools? The following are activities that reading coaches can do with children. These activities require less intensive training and supervision yet can foster much-needed literacy development in children.

1. *Reading stories.* Research on early literacy suggests that reading to young children is positively related to their own success in reading (Morrow, 1997; National Research Council, 1998; Snow & Tabors, 1993). Through exposure to storybooks, children have opportunities to

acquire oral language skills and develop vocabulary (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). For many disadvantaged children, opportunities with books can be limited. Volunteers who read with children one to one or in small groups (two to three children) can provide them with necessary exposure to literacy. Volunteers can read storybooks to young children. In doing this, they can model good, fluent reading. The volunteers can explain the meaning of simple vocabulary words and make connections among unfamiliar words, the story being read, and the children's own experiences. Regardless of their age or reading level, children can benefit from having a story read aloud to them.

The research consistently shows positive effects of storybook reading on oral language skills, vocabulary development, and phonemic awareness (Hoffman, 1997; Klesius & Griffith, 1996; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994; Whitehurst et al., 1988). Research has also shown that children benefit significantly from storybook reading in small groups of three children (Morrow & Smith, 1990). In a typical classroom, it is difficult for teachers to work with small groups of children for any length of time. However, volunteers can be trained to conduct small-group storybook reading activities.

Teaching reading coaches to read storybooks requires minimal supervision. Reading coaches can be trained in basic storybook reading techniques such as reading slowly with expression, providing children the opportunity to see the pictures, and asking a limited yet relevant number of comprehension questions. Storybooks can be selected with the assistance of the classroom teacher and can be coordinated with classroom instruction. In schools with class sizes reaching 30 to 35, children have few opportunities to read one to one with an adult regardless of grade level. Volunteers can provide this important and needed opportunity.

2. *Focusing on comprehension.* As a part of the storybook reading, reading coaches can ask questions and focus on children's comprehension of the story. In large-group settings, when a story is read and a question about the story is asked, there are a few students who will raise their hands and give the answer. Unfortunately, there may be many other children in the class who did not understand the story but will not have an opportunity to have the story explained to them. In a one-to-one situation, volunteers can read a story and ask questions. If the child does not understand something, the reading coach can explain it in specific detail, or go back and reread the section pertaining to the question. This gives the student the opportunity to observe the rereading strategy as one possible solution to comprehension problems. Answering comprehension questions also provides children with the opportunity to talk and use language in a one-on-one setting, potentially increasing children's oral language skills (Morrow, 1997). With minimal training, volunteers could be trained to ask comprehension questions in an appropriate fashion. The questions should require children to elaborate on concepts instead of facilitating a yes or no response (Whitehurst et al., 1988).

3. *Story retelling*. One of the ways young children learn about story comprehension is by having opportunities to retell a story they have read or that has been read to them (Karweit & Wasik, 1996; Morrow, 1985). Reading coaches can coach children in retelling stories. The reading coach can first model retelling methods. Some possible methods include acting out the story, retelling the story verbally, drawing pictures that depict the action, telling the story using the pictures as cues, and writing about the story. Each of these methods provides opportunities for students to talk about a story that they have read, recall the sequence of events in the story, and use vocabulary words from the story.

With the guidance of reading coaches, students can retell stories that were read to them either in class or individually by the reading coach. Reading coaches can ask questions to encourage children to elaborate on certain aspects of the story. Students can also be encouraged to present the story in a sequence, with a beginning, middle, and an end. Through such activities, retelling can promote oral language and comprehension strategies.

4. *Active listening*. Reading coaches can be active listeners for young readers. In home reading situations, parents typically provide the correct word when a child misidentifies a word. This can be very different from the process that occurs in tutoring where the tutor attempts to have the child figure out the word by identifying the first sound or using context. Reading coaches can be taught to be active listeners in a similar way that parents are active listeners. Coaches can determine if children understand the meanings of words and define words that the children do not know. Reading coaches can also have children read familiar stories aloud to them and practice reading fluently and with expression.

Reading coaches can be taught to use techniques that are used frequently when parents read with their children. An example of this is Topping's (1992, 1995, 1998) method of paired/duolog reading. In paired/duolog reading, the tutor reads along with the child. The child must say every word correctly. When the child makes an error, the tutor repeats the word until the child reads it correctly. Paired/duolog reading provides the child with the opportunity to hear the text read correctly. Although the child is not provided with strategies to figure out what a word is, he or she practices reading, is made aware of errors, and practices unfamiliar words. Another technique is the pause prompt praise method (Glynn, 1996). In this approach, the tutor waits for the child to produce the correct response, provides a prompt to help the child, and praises the child's efforts. Both the paired/duolog and pause prompt praise methods have been used with parents and could be applied with reading coaches. One limitation to both techniques is that the reader needs to have approximately a 100-word sight vocabulary. This can limit the kind of reader for which this technique can be used.

5. *Storytelling*. Volunteer reading coaches will come from various backgrounds and bring their own unique ex-

periences to the situation. They can encourage oral language skills and vocabulary by telling stories orally to the children (Leung & Pikulski, 1990). The stories can be a summary of a story the children read or a story about the reading coach as a school-aged child. The stories do not need to be from a book but can be similar to stories that parents tell their children. This experience provides children with the opportunity to hear stories that are not necessarily connected to print and to listen as someone crafts ideas into a sequence of events. Storytelling also is a natural way to establish a relationship between the reading coach and the child. In storytelling the reading coach has an opportunity to talk about his or her own experiences. For example, it would be helpful for young readers to know that their reading coach is in college, the type of job the reading coach has, or the kinds of books the reading coach likes to read. In using the oral tradition of telling stories, children can experience how ideas can be expressed in words.

6. *Creating opportunities to write.* Writing is intimately tied to reading (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Reading coaches can create opportunities for children to write. The process can evolve based on the skill level of the child. At first the reading coach can ask the child to talk about the book he or she recently read. Next, the reading coach can write down what the child says about the book. The reading coach can thus begin to share the responsibility of writing with the child. The child can initially write just one word or one sentence as a start to the writing process. As the reading coach and child become more facile at writing, the activity can become more the child's responsibility.

Reading coaches can also make storybooks and storyboards with beginning readers. The storybook can contain either pictures and text or just pictures. The child can write the story with the reading coach and read the story to his or her class. The child can write some of the stories that his or her reading coach told. However, one important aspect of these suggested writing activities is the coach's degree of involvement with the writing process. Unlike a tutor, the coach can encourage writing as a process and not become overly involved with the mechanics of writing. The correct spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation can be addressed by the teacher. The reading coach truly acts as a coach by encouraging the child to express his or her ideas in writing. Through involvement with these writing activities, children make the connection between reading and writing.

7. *Motivating children to read.* Perhaps one of the most important contributions reading coaches can make to beginning readers is motivating them to read. Research in the area of motivation and reading shows that children who are interested in reading and receive support and encouragement are more likely to persist at reading and learn to enjoy reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997). In a one-to-one situation, reading coaches can provide children with positive reinforcement and encourage them to work hard at reading. Reading coaches can help chil-

dren learn to love books and begin to define themselves as readers.

For children who are constantly faced with failure in a large reading class, working in a one-to-one situation can be very rewarding. Struggling readers can use the time with the reading coach to take chances and be wrong about the meaning of a word or a story without being afraid to admit they don't know something. The reading coach can encourage the young reader to take chances, make mistakes, and learn to read.

Benefits of a reading coach program

Reading coaches can provide important literacy experiences for children. This can be done without focusing directly on tutoring children in reading. Setting up realistic expectations for volunteers to assist in children's literacy development benefits everyone. Students benefit from the additional services, volunteers benefit from providing the service, and the teacher benefits from the assistance. Expecting volunteers to work on teaching reading to children without the necessary support puts all parties at risk.

With reading coaches, the expectations are not lowered but shifted to another goal, the goal of providing rich literacy opportunities to young children. For some children, literacy may not be a priority in the home. Reading coaches can provide the critical literacy-rich experiences for these children. Although this does not take the place of parental involvement, it matches some of the benefits.

Volunteers ranging from college work study students to senior citizens are enthusiastic and motivated to help children. They can be a valuable resource to any school. Instead of using insufficiently trained volunteers to attempt to tutor, schools need to consider using volunteers as reading coaches. The activities designed for reading coaches need minimal training and support, yet the experience they can provide is invaluable. Reading coaches can add an important dimension to children's literacy experiences.

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Even though we have never met, I feel I know you: Using a parent journal to enhance home-school communication

Ellen M. Finnegan

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"What happened in school today?"

"Uhggg..."

"Nothing."

"I don't remember."

"While literature response journals have provided a means for student reading writing connections, teachers are always looking for ways to make linkages with parents" (Farris, 1996, p. 10). Using a parent journal enhances home-school communication. "Teachers have found that by explaining the classroom routines...and the expectations for home reading...they enable parents to support their children in their daily reading" (Koskinen, Blum, Tennant, Parker, Straub, & Curry, 1996, p. 99). I have found this to be true by utilizing a parent journal for the first time during this school year. "Dialogue journals provide meaningful opportunities for writers to communicate with a real audience for real purposes" (Elish-Piper, 1996, p. 37). As a third-grade teacher, I am aware that parents often have questions about their child's school experiences.

In our school district, third graders make a significant transition after second grade. Students from two grades K–2 adjoining buildings cross the street to the grades 3–5 building where enrollment has reached 1,682. Because class sizes are large, a pod system was instituted 2 years ago. Students are assigned to wings or groups designated by the hallway in which their classes occur. Students stay with their wing and are transplanted into a new wing, in the 3–5 building, then are redivided into 3–4 sections. These wings are named by color for easy identification.

Other elements are also present during the transition. Students leave a developmental second-grade experience and

enter a more traditional classroom where expectations change. Third graders learn cursive writing, review addition and subtraction, learn multiplication and division for the first time, and read novels. It is in third grade that students are first faced with extensive preparation for the required IGAP (Illinois Goals Assessment Program) tests. Students become responsible for their own homework, home reading, and related assignments. Early in the year, I often hear that homework is forgotten because Mom forgot to put it into the backpack. I respond, "It is your job to put your homework in your backpack, not Mom's." Miraculously, new habits are often cemented by the end of the year. It is a year of great growth and is amazing for a teacher to experience.

The idea for the parent journal was shared by a graduate school instructor, Mary Vondrak. She brought a model to a class I was taking and shared it. The entire class was delighted to read it and asked her many questions. I found the idea intriguing, and when the current school year approached, I felt the time was right to initiate a journal in my class. I wanted to increase parent communication and raise parent satisfaction. I thought parents needed to be aware of what was happening and to have an open forum in which to ask questions, make comments, or just express their feelings.

Starting this journal required little preparation. All that was needed was a three-ring binder, notebook paper, and a cover letter explaining the procedures. Here is a sample cover letter:

Dear Parents:

I would like to begin a dialogue journal with you in much the same way I dialogue with your child, through writing. We could "talk" from time to time about anything you would like to write about. Every 30 days or so, you will have the opportunity to write and express anything you would like to share with me—questions about our program, concerns, ideas, poems, significant experiences, pictures, etc., and then I will respond within a few days.

After writing back to you, the journal would be circulated to another home. The writing would be open reading for other parents as the journal is circulated; that is, unless you wish to write me a personal or more specific entry, and then our dialogue would be circulated only between us. Once you respond, I'll reply, photocopy a copy of the reply back to you, keep the original in the book and pass the journal on.

This is my first year to try this type of journal. Classrooms and parents that have been involved in this type of open writing find it to be informative and helpful. Please feel free to add any comments, suggestions, or any kind of feedback to help this process. It is my goal to stay connected to you and your child's needs.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Finnegan

I included the school phone number and my e-mail address because I wanted parents to know I would be accessible and available in other ways as well.

The early response was good. I began the journal with a handwritten letter the day after our open house. I wrote a short synopsis of what the class was learning in each curricular area, and I thanked parents ahead of time for their participation in the parent journal. My student teacher at the time also contributed a warm letter. I decided to send the journal home counteralphabetically, Zs to As. This was accepted happily by those who are used to being last in our alphabetical society.

Early comments were lighthearted. Parents were pleased with the opportunity to correspond, and the idea of parents having homework served as a positive model for their children. A question arose regarding our schedule, so it was copied and placed in a plastic sleeve in the front of the journal. Here is an example of an early exchange:

Dear Mrs. Finnegan,

What a great idea! Ah yes, reverse alphabetical order! Who would've thought I have homework and J_____ doesn't. Curriculum night is always a great experience for us to keep in touch with J_____'s busy life by better understanding what he does at school. Thanks for the opportunity to get to know you and learn about third grade.

J_____ enjoys writing but has mentioned that during writer's workshop, the topics are chosen for him. At some point, will he be able to choose his own topics for class work?

Having signed up for room mom duty, I look forward to planning some fun parties this year. Do you have any special suggestions I should know about? I have not heard from the Intermediate Room Rep yet, so please let me know any particulars!

Mrs. Z_____

Dear Mrs. Z_____

Thanks so much for your quick reply. I'm sure J_____ was proud of Mom for doing her homework and remembering to return it (albeit through a messenger!).

We have had two assignments in Writers' Workshop (WW). The first was "Where My Shoes Took Me Last Summer." The second was a short description of their paper clip art project. Once these two are completed, the students are to work on "free writing." There is a large yellow poster on the front chalkboard giving students several ideas. Throughout the school year there will be required assignments, but the students will have the opportunity to explore many areas of writing.

As per our room parties, I have not been notified of any times yet. Parties are on the actual holiday (or closest day before). I'll contact you closer to Halloween as I have a great recipe for Witches' Brew. As per party requests, I do hope we can get together and talk about the parties beforehand. Perhaps the second or third week of October we can talk. Of course, if you have any questions, feel free to call me anytime.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Finnegan

Other parents brought up more serious issues. One lamented her child's anxiety over tests. The parent felt that too much emphasis is placed on standardized tests in an effort to produce a good school report card. I answered her honestly, that our principal's goal this year was to increase student tests scores, which, of course, filtered back down to the teaching staff. But I also assured her that tests were everywhere in life. As adults, we must face driving tests, employment tests, and certification tests. Some amount of test anxiety is normal. The parent was grounded in the sense that she assured her daughter that all she expected from her was to be prepared. She emphasized that it was important for the child to be prepared, and mistakes were okay, as long as the child learned from them. On the other hand, I stressed to the parent that if there was a greater concern and she was not satisfied, she should contact the building principal and/or superintendent and discuss her concerns.

Professionals usually do not receive the amount of positive feedback they are due. Students often say "thank you" or respond with hugs, but I often wondered what parents are saying at home. Are they happy with their child's classroom experiences? Do they know how hard I work? Are they aware that I often dream of my students, reworking the events of the day and planning strategies in a supine position with my eyes closed? One of the marvelous benefits of the journal was the responses from parents. This positive feedback and the compliments that most teachers seldom hear were like a tonic to me. Here are a few comments that brightened my day:

> How do you do it? With all the wonderful things you are doing for the children and now, personally, writing to the parents. We applaud your efforts to keep the lines of communication open with us on a continuing basis.

> I am impressed with the number of units you have done: the unit on simple machines comes to mind. I think I was in the eighth grade before I got essentially the same unit.

> I am impressed with all the growth as far as math, spelling and handwriting, etc.... She loves you as a teacher and is always excited to attend class. That makes everything easier for me!

> I would like to thank you for the positive environment for my daughter's first few weeks in school. It is remarkable how positive her attitude is!

There are some disadvantages to keeping a parent journal. It is a long-term commitment. Every time the journal returned from an overnight stay, I knew I had to write a reply as soon as possible. Often I consulted other teachers about how to answer a certain question appropriately. That meant that my precious planning periods were spent writing, proofreading, and photocopying. Another disadvantage might be angry or unhappy parents venting their concerns in the journal. I did not experience this, but it is a possibility. I hope that if a parent was

unhappy, he/she would call me on the telephone.

"Dialogue journals proved to be an effective way to link classroom learning with the home" (Farris, 1996, p. 15). I think the parent journal has been a highly positive experience for me, my students, and their parents. I recommend it to all teachers who wish to improve home-school communication. I'll close this piece with one final parent comment that illustrates the positive connections that dialogue journals can foster:

> Both my husband and I would like to thank you and the class for the role you have played in helping R_____ settle down. Her first months in America have certainly been an experience and we feel she is coping well. You join the ranks of teachers that R_____ constantly talks about and will no doubt always remember.

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Summer Reading Pals

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Taking down faded bulletin board displays, straightening books on shelves, and repairing well-used game boxes are typical end-of-the-year activities for most U.S. classroom teachers. As the school year draws to a close, we may also find ourselves reflecting on all of our students' successes. Jeff learned how to read chapter books; Sarah blossomed as a writer; Kate couldn't wait for math every day. But there is that uneasy feeling creeping in again. What about Dana, Ronald, and Latoya? They learned how to read; yet 3 months away from books could erode much of their progress and enthusiasm for reading. How can we encourage them to keep reading over the summer knowing they don't have books at home?

Two summers ago, we began the Summer Reading Pals Project to keep in touch with our beginning readers. Every other week in the summer, we mailed books and wrote personal notes to our former students. After reading the books, the children wrote back. Each child received 12 to 14 books by summer's end.

The following May, one former student, Shana, came by to say, "I'm still reading those books you gave me last summer." Her simple words embodied the reason we began this project in the first place: Children who had no books of their own could read over the summer months. If our Summer Reading Pals Project interests you, here are some ideas that will help you get started.

We determined that the selection criteria for participating students should be based on reading level and economic need. Students who qualified for Title I reading assistance met the first criteria. We consulted a list of students qualifying for the free lunch program to determine financial need. We invited 10 students to participate—5 second graders and 5 third graders. Letters were sent to the students' families explaining the project. All 10 families accepted the invitation to participate.

During the last weeks of the school year, a text reading level assessment was completed for each student to establish presummer reading levels. An interest survey was also given. Both the survey and the text reading level information

were used to guide us as we selected books for the students.

We held a kick-off dinner at a neighborhood pizza parlor within walking distance of the students' homes. Each student was accompanied by a parent to the dinner. A brief overview of the project was given, and then the students received the first book along with a container in which to keep all their Summer Reading Pals books.

At the end of the summer, we met with the families again at the pizza parlor to talk about their favorite books, to have parents fill out a survey about the project, and to give the students a special hardcover book to complete their personal libraries.

The money for this project came from Title I funds. We budgeted US$50 per child for books, US$10 per person for the pizza dinners, and US$25 per child for postage to mail the books and letters. If Title I money isn't available, consider asking a business to fund the project.

When the next school year began, we checked each student's summer reading progress using the text reading level assessment. We found that all of the children in the project either maintained or gained reading levels. This result was particularly encouraging to us because beginning readers often regress during the summer and because our goal was to prevent that regression.

Our Summer Reading Pals keep asking us to include them again and to invite their brothers and sisters. What a memorable summer experience this is for students who receive new books and letters from their teacher.

Classbooks: Linking the classroom to the home

Laura Lee Scott

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Teachers are always looking for new ways to communicate with parents and involve them in their children's school lives. Traditionally, we send home graded work, make phone calls, write letters, schedule conferences, send midterm progress reports and report cards, and perhaps compose newsletters. I have found an extremely effective and enjoyable vehicle to send school home with my students—classbooks.

Classbooks are certainly not a new idea; they've been around for quite a while. Young children are fascinated with the idea of publishing books, but very often they can become overwhelmed by the idea of composing an entire book by themselves and seeing it through to publication. They pressure themselves with the perception that books are long. Classbooks take that pressure off. In a classbook each child composes a contribution to the book independently, or the class writes together in language experience style. Either way, children collaborate to work toward a common goal.

In my second-grade classroom, we write classbooks for every conceivable reason, and the children never grow tired of them. My students and I have published books as a culmination to science or social studies units. The children used their content knowledge about prehistoric life as they wrote their contributions for "If I Could Be a Dinosaur." Career options were explored in the classbook "When I Grow Up...." We've written books during our study of holidays—"Halloween Stories," "Thank You," "My Mom," "Christmas Memories."

As part of author studies, we've written books in copy-change style as we emulate our favorite authors. One of my favorites was our own version of the alphabet book *A, My Name Is Alice* by Jane Bayer. Each student took a letter of the alphabet and followed the pattern. We only had 24 children in the class, so my husband and I were recruited for the hard letters, U and X.

Children frequently suggest their favorite books as ideas for classbooks. This past year one of my students found a book

entitled *I Took My Frog to the Library* by Eric Kimmel. Our hilarious version was called "I Took My Porcupine to the Mall." The possibilities are endless in all areas of the curriculum.

When the children finish their contributions for a classbook, I make a front and back cover from construction paper (or recruit a student for this task) and laminate it. At the beginning of each year I use my word processor to create a title page format including all of the students' names. For each book, I customize the title page and add a dedication that the children compose.

As the official bookbinder, I've experimented with several ways of binding and have found a quick and authentic method—I set my sewing machine on the longest stitch size and zip the book right through. The children are delighted with the result and ask, "How did you do that? It looks like a *real* book!"

Classbooks have been part of my practice every year that I've taught. I love to read the books, and the children thoroughly enjoy them time and time again. We've shared them with other classes, with our principal, and with visitors to our classroom, but I have always wanted to share them with the world.

One day a student asked if she could take home one of our classbooks to read to her mother. I readily agreed, and other children began to follow her example. I was excited by this trend, and parents and siblings couldn't wait for the next book to spend the night with them. The books became a little tattered, but they were obviously loved and appreciated. There soon became a need to handle this systematically, so each book was placed in a cardboard or plastic expandable folder for protection. Also included was a class list so the child could check his/her name off after having a turn to take it home for the night. I invited parents and siblings to write letters to the class to respond to the books and to encourage the young authors. These letters were then posted in the classroom for the children to read.

I've had lots of positive feedback about sending the books home. Several parents commented about how reading these books helped them feel like they knew what was going on in the classroom. Others mentioned that sharing these books really opened up the lines of communication between them and their children. Children talked in detail about their own writing, helping their friends, and educating their parents about the writing process.

While enjoying the product, parents soon realized the importance of the process. Reading the classbooks got some parents excited enough about their children's writing that they volunteered to help during writing workshop. Because they were writing for a much wider audience, the children began to view themselves even more as authors and seemed to take new pride in their work. The children wanted the families of their classmates to enjoy their books, so they began to encourage and help each other with vigor.

Classbooks became a real community builder simply because they were being read outside the classroom by a real audience. There was now authenticity and real purpose connected with writing.

Children's books to develop phonemic awareness—for you and parents, too!

Michael F. Opitz

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Phonemic awareness—the awareness that words are composed of sounds—appears to be an important precursor of learning to read (Yopp, 1992). One of the best ways to help children develop it naturally is through the use of children's literature that focuses on some kind of play with the sounds of language (Griffith & Olson, 1992). Rhyme, alliteration, and sound substitution are examples of this language play, and they are used in books in the list. All books have been published within the last 2 years, and the content is suitable for kindergarten and first-grade children. The books can be used by teachers, parents, or both.

What's that? You want to provide parents with more than a list of books? You want to provide them with some specific activities that they can do at home that highlight phonemic awareness? You want to give them a way to keep track of the books they have read and what their children are able to do with words? The letter shown as well as the accompanying activities and record-keeping form (see boxes on following pages) are designed to help you do just that!

Happy reading!

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Griffith, P., & Olson, M. (1992). Phonemic awareness helps beginning readers break the code. *The Reading Teacher, 45*, 516–523.

Yopp, H. (1992). Developing phonemic awareness in young children. *The Reading Teacher, 45*, 696–703.

Letter to parents

Dear Parents,

One prerequisite for learning to read is being aware that words are composed of individual sounds. This awareness is called *phonemic awareness*. You have already started to help your children to develop this awareness by reading to them. Yes, children who are read to seem to develop phonemic awareness with ease and this awareness helps prepare them for learning to read.

Here's how you can continue to help: While reading just about any book to your children is valuable, books that encourage "playing with sounds" through the use of rhyme, rhythm, and repetition of sounds are especially good for the development of phonemic awareness. I have enclosed a list of books with these characteristics along with a few activities for you to do with these books. I am also enclosing a form for those of you who would like to keep a record of the books you have read and your observations.

As you go about reading these books and doing the activities, remember to:

1. Vary the activities so that you and your children continue to focus on the enjoyment of your story-reading time rather than making it seem like a chore.
2. Focus on what your children can do rather than what they cannot. If they cannot complete an activity, try the idea again at another time with another book.
3. Enjoy the whole read-aloud experience! Doing so will convey the message to your children that reading is a fun and meaningful activity.

Thank you for your willingness to help your children become strong readers by doing these activities. Please call me if you have any questions or if you find some additional books that you think should be put on the booklist. I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Your child's teacher

Children's books to develop phonemic awareness

1996 titles

Aylesworth, J. *Wake up little children*. New York: Atheneum. ISBN 0-689-31857-X.
Boynton, S. *Hippos go berserk!* New York: Aladdin. ISBN 0-689-80818-6.
Cowen-Fletcher, J. *Baby angels*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick. ISBN 1-56402-666-3.
Dijs, C. *Up pop the monsters 1, 2, 3!* New York: Scholastic. ISBN 0-590-84762-7.
Doro, A. *Twin pickle*. New York: Holt. ISBN 0-8050-3802-7.
Edwards, P. *Some smug slug*. New York: HarperCollins. ISBN 0-06-024789-4.
Janovitz, M. *Bowl patrol!* New York: North-South. ISBN 1-55858-636-9.
Hubbard, P. *My crayons talk*. New York: Holt. ISBN 0-8050-3529-X.
Kalan, R. *Moving day*. New York: Greenwillow. ISBN 0-688-13948-5.
Kellogg, S. *Frog jump*. New York: Scholastic. ISBN 0-590-45528-1.
Ketteman, H. *Grandma's cat*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN 0-395-73094-5.
Lear, E. *The owl and the pussycat*. New York: Atheneum. ISBN 0-689-81032-6.
Loomis, C. *Rush hour*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN 0-395-69129-X.
MacDonald, A. *Cousin Ruth's tooth*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN 0-395-71253-X.
Martin, B. *"Fire! Fire!" said Mrs. McGuire*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-227562-2.
Martin, M. *From Anne to Zach*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills. ISBN 1-56397-573-4.
McBratney, S. *The caterpillow fight*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick. ISBN 1-56402-804-6.
Most, B. *Cock-a-doodle-moo!* San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201252-4.
Peters, L. *October smiled back*. New York: Holt. ISBN 0-8050-1776-3.
Reasoner, C. *Color crunch!* Los Angeles: Price Stern Sloan. ISBN 0-8431-3936-6.
Reiser, L. *Beach feet*. New York: Greenwillow. ISBN 0-688-14400-4.
Roberts, B. *Camel caravan*. New York: Tambourine. ISBN 0-688-13939-6.
Rotner, S. *Action alphabet*. New York: Atheneum. ISBN 0-689-80086-X.
Seuss, Dr. *My many colored days*. New York: Knopf. ISBN 0-679-87597-2.
Sturges, P. *What's that sound, wooly bear?* Boston: Little, Brown. ISBN 0-316-82021-0.
Tucker, S. *1 2 3 count with me*. New York: Simon & Schuster. ISBN 0-689-80828-3.
Yee, W. *Mrs. Brown went to town*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN 0-395-75282-5.

1997 titles

Andrews, S. *Rattlebone rock*. New York: HarperTrophy. ISBN 0-06-443484-2.
Calmenson, S. *Engine, engine, number nine*. New York: Hyperion. ISBN 0-7868-2127-2.
Carlson, N. *ABC I like me!* New York: Viking. ISBN 0-670-87458-2.
Carlstrom, N. *Better not get wet, Jesse bear*. New York: Aladdin. ISBN 0-689-81055-5.
Carlstrom, N. *Raven and River*. Boston: Little, Brown. ISBN 0-316-12894-5.
Ellwand, D. *Emma's elephant*. New York: Dutton. ISBN 0-525-45792-5.
Grover, M. *The accidental zucchini*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201545-0.
Hamanaka, S. *The hokey pokey*. New York: Simon & Schuster. ISBN 0-689-80519-5.
Harris, P. *Mouse creeps*. New York: Dial. ISBN 0-8037-2183-8.
Jonas, A. *Watch William walk*. New York: Greenwillow. ISBN 0-688-14172-2.
Katz, B. *Truck talk*. New York: Scholastic. ISBN 0-590-6928-X.
Kessler, C. *Konte Chameleon: Fine, fine, fine*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills. ISBN 1-56397-181-X.

(continued)

Children's books to develop phonemic awareness (continued)

Kirk, D. *Miss Spider's tea party*. New York: Scholastic. ISBN 0-590-06519-X.
Knowles, S. *Edwina the emu*. New York: HarperTrophy. ISBN 0-06-443483-4.
Lavis, S. *Cock-a-doodle-doo*. New York: Lodestar. ISBN 0-525-67542-6.
Lundgren, M. *We sing the city*. New York: Clarion. ISBN 0-395-68188-X.
Mallett, D. *Inch by inch*. New York: HarperTrophy. ISBN 0-06-443481-8.
Martin, B. *The wizard*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201568-X.
Masurel, C. *No, no, Titus*. New York: North-South. ISBN 1-55858-725-X.
McDonnell, F. *A B C*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick. ISBN 0-7636-0118-7.
Medearis, A. *Rum-a-tum-tum*. New York: Holiday House. ISBN 0-8234-1143-5.
Miller, M. *Whose hat?* New York: Mulberry. ISBN 0-688-15279-1.
Mora, P. *Uno, dos, tres; One, two, three*. New York: Clarion. ISBN 0-395-67294-5.
Most, B. *Moo-ha*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201248-6.
Most, B. *Oink-ha*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201249-4.
Murphy, C. *Alphabet magic*. New York: Simon & Schuster. ISBN 0-689-81286-8.
Nichols, G. *Asana and the animals*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick. ISBN 0-7636-0145-4.
Noll, S. *Surprise!* New York: Greenwillow. ISBN 0-688-15170-1.
Parker, V. *Bearobics*. New York: Viking. ISBN 0-670-87034-X.
Paulsen, G. *Work song*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-200980-9.
Pomeroy, D. *Wildflower A B C*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201041-6.
Ruelle, K. *The book of baths*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201003-3.
Ruelle, K. *The book of bedtimes*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201001-7.
Ruelle, K. *The book of breakfasts*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201064-5.
Ryan, P. *A pinky is a baby mouse*. New York: Hyperion. ISBN 0-7868-2190-6.
Shappie, T. *Where is your nose?* New York: Scholastic. ISBN 0-590-87727-5.
Sierra, J. *Counting crocodiles*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-200192-1.
Siomades, L. *A place to bloom*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills. ISBN 1-56397-656-0.
Taylor, L. *Can I be good?* San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201552-3.
Testa, F. *A long trip to Z*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. ISBN 0-15-201610-4.
Wegman, W. *ABC*. New York: Hyperion. ISBN 1-56282-696-4.
Wellington, M. *Night house, bright house*. New York: Dutton. ISBN 0-525-45491-8.

Ideas for using the books to develop book enjoyment and phonemic awareness

1. Read the book to your children for enjoyment.

2. Read the book and stop when you come to a rhyming word. Ask your child to state which word might fit. For example, after reading the first few pages of *Bowl Patrol!* you might read the word *stop* and pause to see if your child fills in the rhyming word *drop*.

3. Ask your child to tell you another word that begins with the same sound as the given word. For example, when reading *Watch William Walk*, ask for additional words that begin with the same sound as William.

4. Tell or ask your child what the author is doing with the words. When reading *Camel Caravan*, for example, you might say something like, "The author is changing the first part in some of these words. She then uses the word three times. Can you hear it?" If you want to determine if your child noticed on his or her own, you might say something like, "What's the author doing with some of these words?"

5. Allow for spontaneous responses. Your child may chime in with words, want to dramatize some or all of the story, or create another similar story. All of these responses are appropriate and will further help your child sense that reading is a pleasurable activity.

Parents' phonemic awareness observation record

Child's name _____

Date	Title of book	States words that rhyme; states other rhyming words	Hears and states sound at the start of a word	States another word that begins with the same sound as a given word	Other observations

Family and community involvement: The bedrock of reading success

Robert B. Cooter, Jr.
Earlene Mills-House
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Dallas Public Schools (Texas, USA), much like other large urban school districts throughout the United States, has experienced serious literacy challenges in recent decades. Several years ago achievement test data indicated that only about one in four children were reading at grade level by the end of third grade (on average students read about 6 months below level). This third-grade benchmark has proven to be a meaningful indicator of progress, or lack thereof, nationally. In the case of Dallas, by the time students reach ninth grade their average reading level is some 2½ years below grade placement. It is not difficult to see the correlation between low literacy levels and such social problems as a rise in juvenile crime, an attraction for many youngsters to gangs, and a general sense of hopelessness among so many children.

In 1997 Dallas Public Schools launched a new balanced literacy initiative aimed at ensuring that all students attain an appropriate level of reading fluency by the end of third grade. Mandated by the board of education, the *Dallas Reading Plan* is a kindergarten through third-grade initiative calling for such reforms as the identification of research-documented "benchmark" skills and concomitant assessment procedures for emergent and early readers, a Reading Academy for some 3,000 teachers patterned after staff development programs used in highly successful corpo-

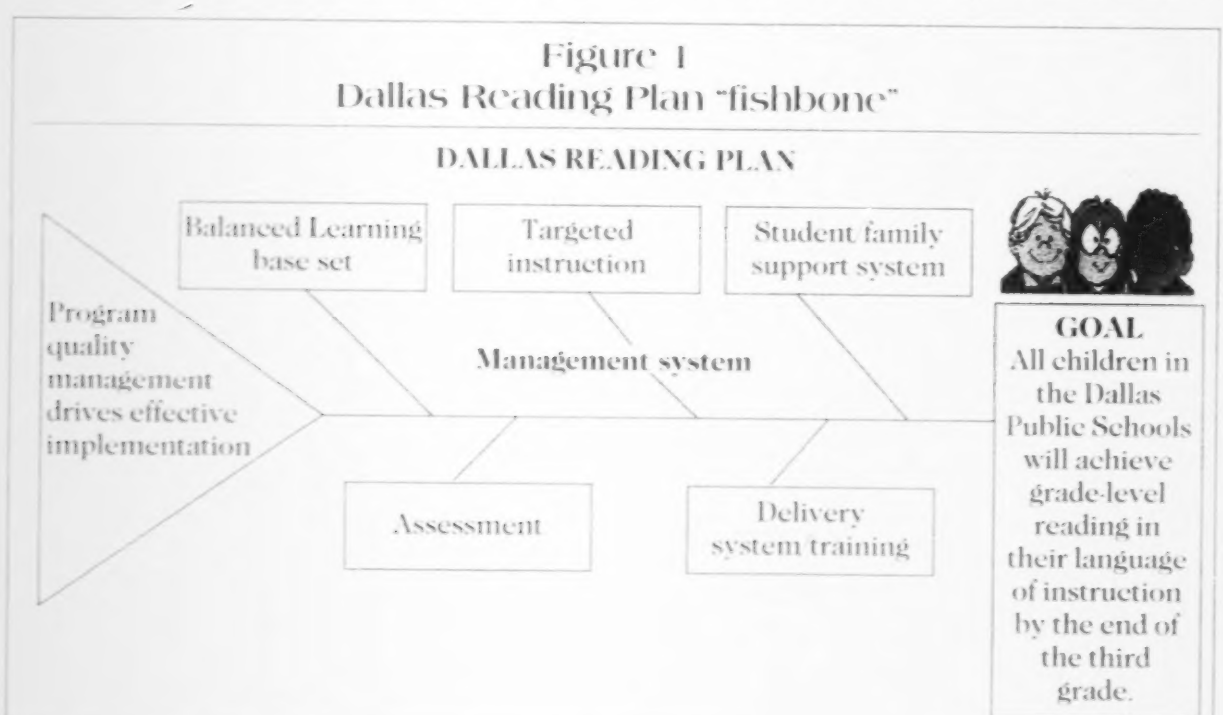
rations, targeted programs for children having special learning needs, and family and community outreach programs (see Figure 1). The goal of this latter category, *family and community outreach*, is to create a literacy education support system with primary caregivers in the homes as well as other stakeholders in the community as a critical adjunct to the balanced literacy program in the local schools.

In this article we describe several steps we have taken at the school district level that build upon the natural bedrock of support for children in Dallas—family members and other stakeholders concerned about improving literacy. In addition to ideas that could be adapted by other teachers, school districts, and their neighborhood communities, we provide a short list of references and materials we have generated that are available for replication efforts.

DEAR Dallas

Research indicates that young children read on average about 7 to 8 minutes during the school day (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). Yet we know that the development of fluent reading requires massive amounts of practice in order to satisfy student interest, build fluency, increase vocabulary, and improve comprehension. Research data on the status of reading in Dallas revealed that many students had significant fluency and comprehension problems, and that most teachers were not providing sufficient independent reading time as a regular part of the daily routine. Clearly, some sort of sus-

Figure 1
Dallas Reading Plan "fishbone"


DALLAS READING PLAN
Balanced Learning base set
Targeted instruction
Student family support system
Program quality management drives effective implementation
Management system
Assessment
Delivery system training
GOAL
All children in the Dallas Public Schools will achieve grade-level reading in their language of instruction by the end of the third grade.

tained silent reading on a daily basis was needed. It was from this documented need that DEAR Dallas was born.

The goal of DEAR Dallas (modeled after the *D*rop *E*verything *A*nd *R*ead classroom strategy) was to get the entire city to join Dallas Public Schools in making a dramatic statement in support of reading. Our vision was that all citizens, children and adults, would stop whatever they were doing for 10 minutes at an assigned time (10:00 to 10:10 a.m. on March 6) and read a book, newspaper, or magazine just for fun. Publicity was arranged in cooperation with local newspapers, television, and radio stations, and with the city buses that traveled about the city brandishing large advertising banners (see Figure 2) to help spread the word.

Who joined the DEAR Dallas citywide effort? Nearly everyone. The mayor proclaimed March 6 as "DEAR Dallas Day" and joined in by reading with all teachers and children of Dallas in grades K–12. The police chief, also a strong supporter of children and education in Dallas, joined in along with downtown businesses and corporate offices. Governor George W. Bush, seeing DEAR Dallas as concordant with his statewide reading initiative, issued a statement praising the effort and explaining that we must all encourage our children to read every day for fun and to strengthen their literacy skills for improved life choices. Other prominent community leaders were asked to share with us the title of the book they planned to read during the event, which led to the publication of the first ever "Superintendent's Adult Reading List."

Figure 2
DEAR Dallas poster

Getting DEAR time started at the classroom or school level has been quite simple. It begins with an understanding that time set aside for pleasure reading is not a frill, but a necessity in a balanced reading program. Teachers should set aside at least 20 minutes per day for students to self-select and read books. We teach students to self-select books using the "Rule of Thumb" method (Reutzel & Cooter, 1996): after choosing a book of interest, open the book to any page with a lot of words and count the number of words you don't know. If you use all five fingers to count unknown words on one page, the book is too difficult; put it back and choose another you like just as well. For children in grades K–1 we have found it necessary to have DEAR time for about 10 minutes twice a day due to their shorter attention spans. Schoolwide DEAR time can be achieved with the principal's support. Simply set aside a time daily when everyone reads. It is a truly powerful

tool that can have magnificent results when everyone participates.

To get our districtwide DEAR campaign off the ground we formed a committee headed up by an energetic and charismatic lead teacher. Because of her rather infectious enthusiasm she was able to enlist the support of central office administrators, principals, corporate sponsors, and the local media. DEAR is a wonderful common sense strategy that virtually sells itself, but to get it going on a districtwide basis requires an inspirational and vivacious teacher-leader. Fortunately, such people are common to our profession.

DEAR Dallas will continue now as a yearly event in the city and is being adopted by many neighboring school districts. We are also working with all Dallas schools to make the first Thursday of each month DEAR time. One thing is certain: many children are now engaging in independent reading activities daily in school and at home as part of their teacher's normal literacy education routine.

Reading with Wishbone™: Videotapes for parent outreach

DEAR Dallas was just the beginning of our campaign to encourage reading at home. As the Dallas Reading Plan teachers and other team members scanned the horizon for opportunities, we discovered a fabulous resource in our own backyard—a dog named Wishbone. The creation of Lyrick Studios, Wishbone is a popular character on Public Broadcast System (PBS) stations in the United States who is a remarkable promoter of great books. We thought he might be able to help us encourage many children, parents, and caregivers to use our public libraries more often.

Wishbone is the lovable Jack Russell terrier who each week reenacts a famous classic novel for viewers. Fully costumed in period clothing appropriate to the highlighted book, Wishbone draws youngsters and adult viewers alike into the wonderful world of books. Our colleagues at Lyrick Studios agreed to join our balanced literacy effort and offered Wishbone's services as our Ambassador of Reading.

Two great products have arisen from this exciting collaboration that are of benefit not only to Dallas children, but to interested teachers across the U.S. The primary product is a high-quality videotape coproduced by the Dallas Reading Plan and Big Feats! Entertainment. Entitled *DEAR Families: Paws to Read...with Wishbone*, this film features Wishbone in captivating vignettes extolling the virtues of recreational reading through DEAR time. In essence, it features Wishbone acting out a series of book talks and offering advice to children and adults for choosing books for family DEAR time. This humorous tale is appropriate for children, Parent-Teacher Association and civic groups, and especially for families. We have included a copy of the videocassette tape in the Reading Backpacks (see next section) for all our K–3 classrooms so that every family is sure to be exposed to the helpful information about libraries and the DEAR concepts presented by Wishbone.

Figure 3
Wishbone™ promotional drawing

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Teachers everywhere who are interested in motivating parents to read with their children can take advantage of this Wishbone video, too. Arrangements have been made so that teachers can order the Wishbone video at a very minimal cost (about US$3) for their classroom or school (see our Internet homepage for ordering information at the end of this article). It's a great way to "unleash" the power of reading!

Reading Backpacks

One of the challenges we face in Dallas is getting high-quality books written in English and Spanish into the hands of children at home. Many of our families are economically disadvantaged and simply do not have books for their children to read. Beginning in the fall of 1998, we implemented a Reading Backpacks strategy to get books of appropriate interest and reading levels into each child's home at least once per week.

Based on the Traveling Tales Backpacks concept (Reutzel & Cooter, 1996; Reutzel & Fawson, 1990) for promoting writing, the Dallas Reading Plan provided each and every K–3 classroom teacher in the district with five Reading Backpacks, a large supply of trade books on varying topics and readability levels in both English and Spanish, easy activities for parents to do with their children on printed card stock adapted from Mooney's (1990) Reading To, With, and By strategies, a copy of the Wishbone™ video, and some materials for written responses (markers, colored paper, scissors, etc.). We also included a simple Family Report Form for adults to note which books were read by their child and to whom, as well as any reader response activities they were able to do at home. In this way teachers are able to track student interests and, to a degree, outside reading habits.

Reading Backpacks are regarded as a wonderful success in our schools and are treasured by our young readers. We include our Internet homepage address later in this article for teachers interested in obtaining a list of Reading Backpack contents and the books we selected.

Summer Food and Reading Program: Volunteer training

One of the great concerns in urban communities is the welfare of children during the summer months. When schools are out many children regress in their literacy development. Another worry is that some of the children may not have access to the nutritious meals available to them during the school year. To respond to both of these needs, the Greater Dallas Community of Churches (GDCC) developed a Summer Food and Reading Program. They discovered that a city with numerous restless 5–12-year-olds, comfortable space at local churches, a pool of enthusiastic volunteers, and 20,000 gently used donated books can provide all the ingredients needed for a successful summer "reading and feeding" program.

A one-to-one reading program offered by GDCC during the summer of 1997 successfully reached a number of the children who originally dropped in just for a meal, but some children were less than enthusiastic about the reading portion of the day. In an effort to reach all of the children at some 50 sites in the 1998 Summer Food and Reading Program, GDCC planners asked the Dallas Reading Plan leadership for help in improving their reading program activities. We selected the Reading To, With, and By model (Mooney, 1990) to involve some of the more reluctant readers. Several of the Dallas Reading Plan's Lead Reading Teachers set about designing interactive training for the volunteers in effective balanced reading instruction.

Making reading fun was one of the basic tenets of the training model for the more than 200 volunteer tutors from Building Blocks (a church group) and Americorp (America Reads Challenge Act of 1997). Volunteers were taught ways to read aloud favorite poems and stories, encourage buddy reading using big books, make big books, and encourage children's oral reading through support strategies. Volunteers were also taught how to establish a print-rich environment using the children's own work.

The success of the training sessions was apparent as judged by the reactions of the children, volunteers, and organizers. Children citywide reported to family members that reading was their favorite part of the day. Building Blocks volunteers, many of whom were teens from local churches, expressed a sense of empowerment because of the training. This potent connection to the community is one that we plan to expand as we seek to develop a new literacy ecology for many children during summer months.

To start your own summer reading and nutrition program, we suggest contacting local church leaders, social support agencies, and youth organizations (boys and girls clubs, the local YMCA, etc.). Urban centers have a number of such agencies that are looking to leverage their resources through partnering. Business-oriented clubs, such as Rotary International and Kiwanis, can also be helpful in recruiting volunteers and securing funding. Our efforts have been boosted by the generous sup-

port of several foundations that are interested in literacy. Gifts from US$500 to six figures are not unheard of for a well-designed plan.

The Reading Channel

One of the tools many large urban school districts have at their disposal is one or more "public access" cable television channels from local providers. Dallas Public Schools has five such channels. As a direct result of the DEAR Dallas campaign and the Wishbone™ partnership, the Dallas Reading Plan was offered its own public access channel by the school district. While production arrangements and offerings are still emerging, the new *Reading Channel* has much to offer in our family outreach efforts.

During the fall of 1998 we launched the *Reading Channel* as a support for families in raising literate children. One way this is accomplished is to air each evening during prime time (6–9:00 p.m.) alternative television offerings oriented toward positive literacy habits. We learned that, as part of the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and cable television charters, school districts having a public access channel could rerun at no charge any PBS program from the prior year. Thus, such programs as *Reading Rainbow*, *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, *Sesame Street*, and, of course, our friend *Wishbone* could be aired on our new *Reading Channel*. A regular slate of offerings is planned so that the *Reading Channel* can become a welcomed friend to families in our district and region.

School districts interested in taking advantage of public access channels should do several things. First, check with the central office administrator responsible for communications and distance learning initiatives in your school district. This person is a valuable resource who will know the details of public access initiatives in your district and the procedures to get things started. If your district is new to this kind of enterprise, then contact the cable television provider(s) in your area directly and inquire as to the public access provisions in their charter. Finally, if you are interested in rebroadcasting PBS television programs like the ones mentioned above, get in touch with your area Public Broadcasting affiliate to learn about how you can partner with them to make your plan a reality.

Refrigerator Reading

Whether engaging in a major reading initiative in a large urban center or in a single classroom, communication with families is critical. Many times adults will say to our teachers, "I would love to help my child become a better reader...I just don't know what to do. Can you help me?" We have found that monthly newsletters for families are a great vehicle for communicating easy-to-do activities to primary caregivers.

We call our newsletter *Refrigerator Reading*, a reference to the age-old practice of putting important school papers on the refrigerator for everyone to see. It is a simple one-page document we send to all

3,000 kindergarten through Grade 3 teachers for them to disseminate each quarter. Included are ideas for parents (available in Spanish or English) pertaining to such topics as helping your child self-select high-interest books, read-alouds, how to encourage recreational writing, being a good listener when your child reads, retellings, questions after reading, study tips, and ways to become involved in your child's classroom as a volunteer. We also like to highlight special activities in the community that relate to our reading mission, and include humorous tales about school life (like one principal's "No whining" rule).

Reports that some parents collect our newsletters and mail copies to others have confirmed the usefulness of this friendly medium.

The Dallas Reading Plan Internet homepage

As computers in homes, public libraries, workplaces, and schools have become increasingly commonplace, many organizations are establishing an Internet homepage. We persuaded a talented "Web master" (a "techie" already on the district payroll) to help us design a new homepage (see Figure 4) for our initiative as a distance learning tool for parents, teachers, college researchers, foundations, business leaders, and others frequently asking for more information on reading. The Web page enables people from around the world to access at any time information on the Dallas Reading Plan, upcoming learning events, how to contact Dallas's "reading czar" or other program leaders and teacher-coaches, support materials for assisting children in becoming literate in the home, ways of establishing literacy materials centers in schools, links to other related Internet Web sites, and many other options.

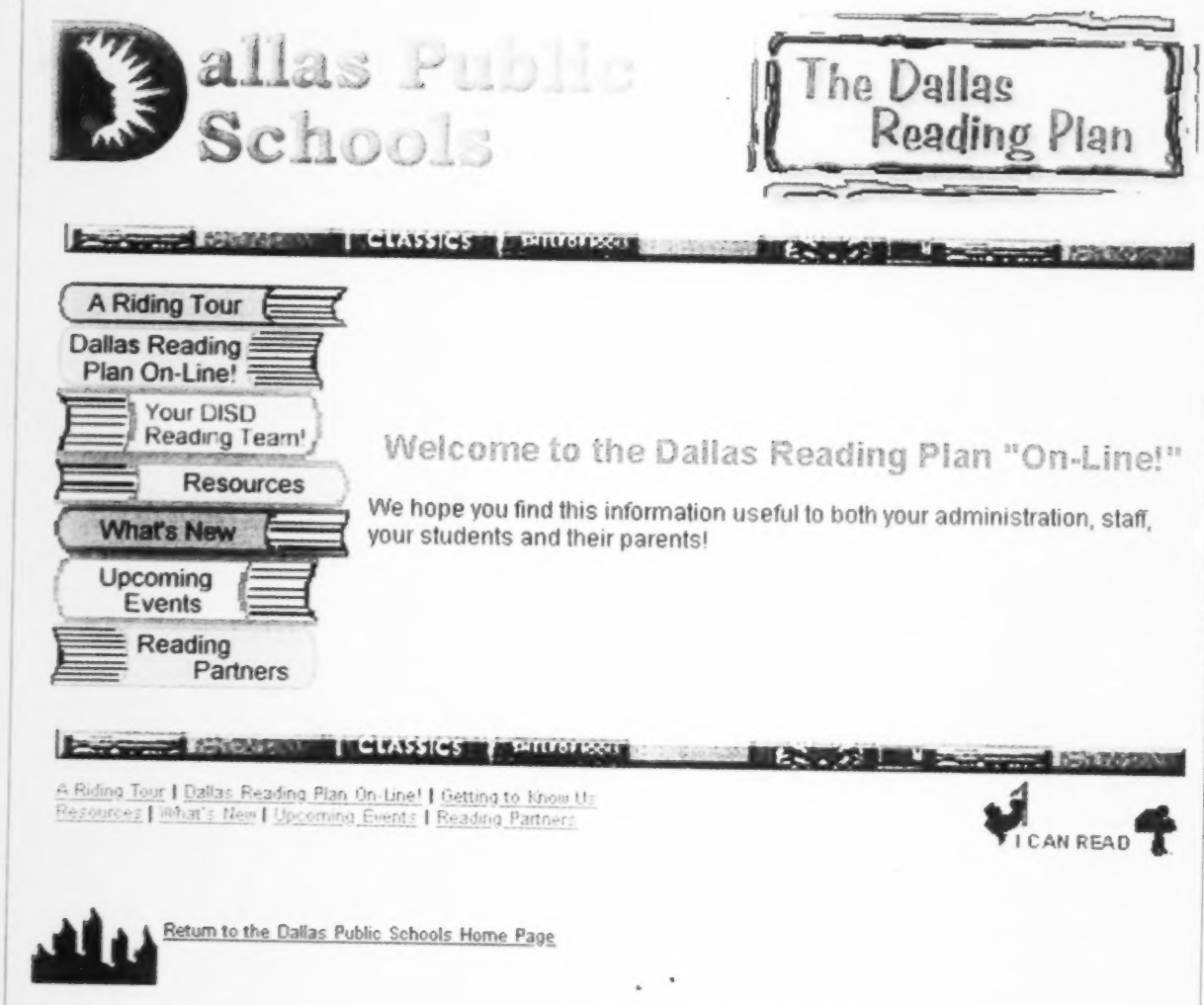
The homepage is a living document that is constantly under construction and revision and is a terrific tool for serving all stakeholders in the balanced literacy reform effort.

Family literacy as the bedrock of improvement

Urban centers around the globe often struggle with the question of how to improve the literacy learning of their students. Considering the increasing literacy demands placed on society in the Information Age, we cannot justify anything less than a global call to arms in the war against illiteracy (Wertheimer & Drew, 1998).

For any reading initiative to succeed one must enlist the support of family and community members. We have learned that when parents and other caregivers are provided with helpful information and concomitant reading materials they nearly always respond in ways that help their children succeed. The efforts outlined in this article represent our first steps along a path leading to greater literacy for our children. They are strategies that seem to be helpful for native speakers of English as well as for

Figure 4
Dallas Reading Plan homepage


Dallas Public Schools
The Dallas Reading Plan
CLASSICS
A Riding Tour
Dallas Reading Plan On-Line!
Your DISD Reading Team!
Resources
What's New
Upcoming Events
Reading Partners
Welcome to the Dallas Reading Plan "On-Line!"
We hope you find this information useful to both your administration, staff, your students and their parents!
CLASSICS
A Riding Tour | Dallas Reading Plan On-Line! | Getting to Know Us
Resources | What's New | Upcoming Events | Reading Partners
I CAN READ
Return to the Dallas Public Schools Home Page

children who initially are speakers of other languages.

When one launches a major literacy initiative for urban children it is somewhat tempting to believe that part of the struggle will be getting families to join the effort. This is not so. When families send their children to our schools each day, they send to us the best and most precious gift they have. When we are able to offer them quality suggestions for helping their children succeed they deeply appreciate the assistance. They are the bedrock of literacy support for their children. We need to

build our literacy efforts and programs upon this bedrock.

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Breaking the parental barrier

Andrea L. Burkhart

VOLUME 48, NUMBER 7, APRIL 1995

I was beginning my second year of teaching at St. Michael School on the south side of Chicago. Although I got to know many parents my first year, I still felt a distance between some of us. St. Michael's student population consists of African-American, Haitian, Nigerian, and Hispanic students. I am 23, I look younger than my age, and I grew up in a small quiet town quite different from the inner city. I sensed that some parents questioned my ability to relate to and teach their children.

Involving parents in education can be a challenge for any teacher. When working in the inner city, this task can be even more complicated. Greenwood and Hickman (1991) report less parental involvement among stepfamilies, minorities, and single-parent homes. All of my students fit into at least one of those categories. I knew that schools are more effective when parents are more involved (Giordano, 1992). I wanted to create a parent participation project that involved parents and students together, provided a learning experience, and expanded and developed students' literacy skills. Moreover, I hoped to encourage parents to become involved in their child's learning and provide guidance in specific ways to do so (Epstein, 1988). To accomplish these goals, I developed a project around the theme of biographies.

First, the children and I discussed what a biography was and compared it to other genres of writing. The children offered names of people they were interested in learning about. After we selected six people, I searched public, school, and classroom libraries for biographies that targeted audiences of children. Our final list included Beverly Cleary, Martin Luther King Jr., Christa McAuliffe, Dr. Seuss, Michael Jordan, and George Bush.

Each day the children and I gathered in the reading corner. Here, I read a biography aloud and we discussed what we learned. As we talked I recorded the children's responses on large chart paper. Afterwards, we reread what we wrote, checked for missing information, and added additional information if needed. Finally, the children drew a picture of the person they learned about and wrote a short biography using information from the books. After we read all six biographies, students used the charts of information to look for similarities, differ-

ences, and patterns among the information recorded on each individual.

Next, I introduced the writing project to the children. All of them would write a biography about a parent or guardian. They would formulate questions, interview their parent or guardian of choice, and use the information to write a biography that they would make into a book. I sent a letter home explaining the project to parents. All agreed to participate.

The children created questions based on the common information from the biography charts: What high school did you graduate from? What is your job? Who is your hero/heroine? What is the most important thing you've ever done? They also decided to create questions on things they were curious about personally, such as favorite foods and colors.

Each child then interviewed a parent. Afterward, we gathered around a table and the children shared information about their parents. The conversation flowed easily; students were amazed that some of their parents shared interests and backgrounds. I received a few notes from parents about how much fun the interview was. The barrier was beginning to fall.

Next, the task of writing the biographies began. While drafting, children freely asked both their peers and me for advice on what to include and how to phrase information correctly. After the first drafts were completed, each student met with a classmate for a peer editing and revising session. Questions were asked for clarification, and spelling and grammar mistakes were identified. A second draft was brought to me for a second editing and revising session. At last, final copies were made into books with illustrations. The knowledge the students had gained about their parents was clearly demonstrated in their writing.

> Fred's (J's father) job is an electrician. That means he works with pipes and wires.

> Liza's (V's mother) most important thing to do was to give birth to her children!

> My mom works...in the Chapter One lab. She did not grow up to be what she wanted. She wanted to be a stewardess.

Each child took his or her book home to share with the family. I sent home a short questionnaire about the project for parents to complete that addressed educational value for both parent and child, pleasure in participating, and suggestions for further involvement. All of the parents returned the questionnaire and most wrote lengthy positive responses. The overwhelming majority of parents enjoyed the project and believed their child had learned something new about them. The following examples indicate the range of their responses.

> Micah now knows that my father was my hero. He realizes that heroes don't have to be television characters.

> My son was great with delivering the questions. We had a great time doing it together.

She was surprised to find out that as a little girl I played most of the games she plays now.

She learned a lot more about how I grew up and I learned how to be patient in answering her questions fully.

Family projects curriculum

September: Family Tree

Parents and students will work together to trace family roots. A visual display will be created and an object presented that reflects the family history, such as food, music, dance, literature, or clothing.

October: Weather

Students and parents will predict weather patterns for the month. They will watch weather reports to compare their predictions and keep track of their work in a journal.

November: Family reading month

Parents and students will read to or with each other daily. The books and the amount of time spent reading will be recorded daily and turned in at the end of the month.

December: Biographies

Students will research biographies, create questions, and then interview a parent or guardian. They will write a biography of that person and share it with their family.

January: Measurement

Parents and students will predict the measurement (length, weight, area, etc.) of an object two to three times a week. Then, after the object is measured, a comparison between the predicted and actual measurement will be recorded in a journal.

February: Poetry Month

A book of family poetry will be created. The students will be responsible for educating their families about the project, collecting the poems, and compiling them into book form.

March: Plants

Each student will take home two plants in milk cartons. They will take care of one, and a parent or guardian will take care of the other. One will be given light, and the other will not. Together, they will track the progress of plant growth.

April: Decisions

Three times a week, a question that poses a hypothetical situation that requires a decision will be sent home with the students. The parent and child will discuss the options the child has and together write a short response. The questions will be related to topics such as drugs and gangs, as well as those specified by parents.

May: Simple Machines

After studying simple machines in science, each student will create a simple machine. This will be worked on at home with the guidance of parents.

I also asked parents to offer suggestions for topics that could be integrated with more family-school projects. I wanted them to know that their ideas were appreciated and worthwhile and that "contact between parents and teacher should be a two-way process, from home to school and from school to home" (Gelfer, 1990, p. 164). Most parents said similar projects would be welcomed. Many suggested keeping the projects related to a family theme. Their suggestions included family trees, peer pressure, simple machines found in the home, and a family reading month. I took their ideas, added a few of my own, and created a curriculum of family projects for each month of the school year (see Figure).

The biography project did help break the parental barrier. The parents were involved with a meaningful academic task with their children and were given the opportunity to offer input into their children's curriculum. The children's literacy skills grew through reading and writing. Together we learned the importance of a mutual relationship and its positive effect on students (Moore & Littlejohn, 1992).

The project taught me to look at the needs and interests of students and begin from there to build relationships with parents by giving them the opportunity to share ideas and help. Parents, students, and teachers can gain insight through mutual teaching and learning. When parents participate in specific activities and projects that they have helped plan, they will continue to contribute to the success of their children.

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Motivating children's at-home reading with book swaps

John Michael Sawyer

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Many children have few books in their homes that are of interest to them or that they can call their own. Yet clearly, the presence of children's books in the home is a contributing factor to success in learning to read (Durkin, 1966). In his international study on reading achievement, Elley found that children from homes with larger book collections had higher levels of achievement in reading (Elley, 1992).

One way to put more books in a child's home library is through a book swap or book exchange (Dobbins, 1981, Richardson, 1983). What follows is a detailed plan for a book swap, which not only helps place new books in the homes of most children but also places books in the homes of children who may have no books at all.

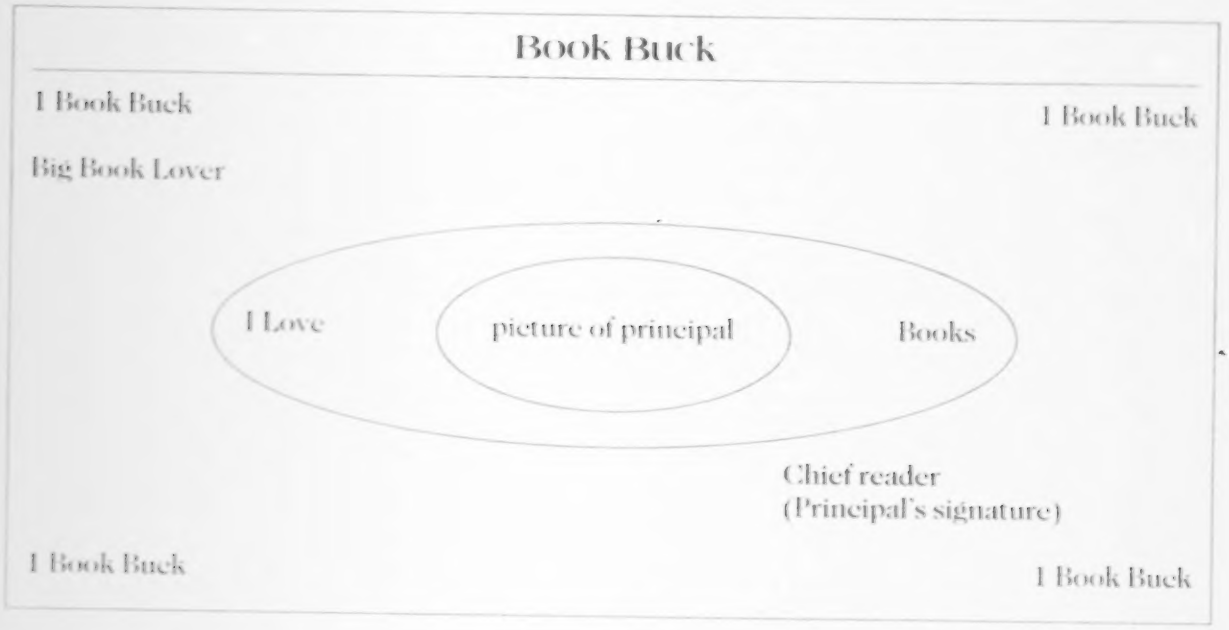
What is a book swap?

A book swap occurs when children in a school go through their home collections and choose books they no longer want. They bring those books to school and exchange them for Book Bucks. On a given day, children can use their Book Bucks to purchase books that other children have brought in.

Book Bucks are easy to make. Simply draw a U.S. dollar, but instead of the number one in each corner, type the words "1 Book Buck" and inset a picture of the principal in the center. Have the principal sign the Buck (see Figure). Copy on green paper as many sheets of Book Bucks as you need.

Do lots of promotion

Have the students make posters and place them all over school. Ask each teacher to promote the event many times in class. Call the local newspaper. Send home announcements. Sometimes children will choose books that they no longer want but their brothers, sisters, or parents value. Thus, do not accept books unless there is a note of permission from the parents and publicize this in the home announcements.



Collecting books

Each teacher should collect books and issue Book Bucks. Teachers can have their students help. A 3-week period is a reasonable amount of time for the collection.

One of the purposes of the book swap is to get books into the hands of those children who have few or no books. Unfortunately, these children will have few to turn in. Therefore, during the collection period, give Book Bucks as rewards to those children who need books. You will have more Book Bucks than books. This is called "literary inflation," and it means that you need more books. You will need more books anyway because some of the books turned in will be in poor condition or otherwise inappropriate.

How to get more books

We have found that secondhand stores, St. Vincent De Paul, Salvation Army, Goodwill, and some commercial stores will donate children's books. In addition, public and school libraries will often donate books they have eliminated from their collections. Finally, the local newspaper will often run free announcements requesting people with grown children to donate books. Using these methods, I have acquired hundreds of books for my book swaps.

Organizing the books

Once they are collected, go through the books and make three categories: picture books (Grades K–3), story books

(Grades 2–4), and upper-level books (Grade 4 through Adult).

If you are not sure of the content of some of the books, read a few pages. We once received a book entitled *Here Kitty Kitty*, which showed a kitten on the cover. It turned out to be a pornographic book on a house of prostitution in New Orleans. I discovered this 3 weeks later when a parent returned the book to my principal who then called me in to discuss the issue.

The big day

Place the early grade books on the seats or benches of the lunch tables so that the small children may see them easily. All of the remaining books may be placed on the lunch tables with the covers up. Allow the younger children to go through first and then move up the grades.

Tell the students they may go through the line twice. The first time they may only use two Book Bucks. Later, after all the children have gone through once, those children who have additional Book Bucks may use them for the remaining books. This assures there will be enough books to go around. Do only one grade at a time in 15-minute intervals. After the children have their books, allow them some reading time to get acquainted with their selections. Keep some quality books aside to assure that those students who don't have many books get some quality books.

Save the extra books for the next swap. Use them as rewards for good reading or add them to a classroom library. Press flowers in them. Brainstorm uses for books that are old or in poor condition.

How often should I have a book swap?

Once a semester is often enough. If bookswaps are held just before Christmas holiday and summer vacation, the children will have new books to take home for their vacations.

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A celebration of reading: How our school read for one million minutes

Sherrell Shanahan
Judy Wojciechowski
Gina Rubik

VOLUME 52, NUMBER 1, SEPTEMBER 1998

On a glorious sunny morning in June, I was proud to walk in a neighborhood parade with my well-read fifth-grade students. Along with the other students and staff in our K–6 building, we had reached our goal! Our combined minutes of reading at home had reached the one million mark. The all-school parade was a well deserved celebration.

—fifth-grade teacher

The students and teachers of El Sierra Elementary School in Downers Grove, Illinois, USA, a middle-class suburb of Chicago, will long remember the 1996–97 school year as one in which they met a major reading challenge. A goal was set for the students and staff to read for one million minutes and, after a year of hard work and much pleasure, it had been done. At the time, they occasionally wondered if anyone in his or her right mind would take on such a formidable task, but the outcome was so positive that the faculty has already begun planning future reading projects.

The Million Minute Reading Incentive Program came about through the efforts of El Sierra's School Improvement Committee's desire to encourage students to read more. In Illinois, by state board of education mandate, school committees are expected to develop annual school improvement plans (SIPs) that will allow them to deliver the best educational program possible to all students.

El Sierra's SIP committee was composed of the school principal, a reading specialist, a third-grade teacher, a fifth-grade teacher, and a parent. Committee members examined 5 years of test scores and discovered that, although our average scores were good (more than half of our students scored in the top two quartiles), the reading abilities of many of our top stu-

dents appeared to be in decline. The committee wondered about the lowered scores for the top students and considered various explanations for what was happening.

Given the information available, we decided that the most reasonable explanation was that students were not getting enough reading practice to become fluent. Many teachers had small sustained silent reading programs in their classes, but it appeared to us that many students were not reading on their own away from school. Also, we had shifted to a literature-based program a few years earlier, and the texts were difficult for many of the students. Perhaps students were not getting enough reading time with these materials to develop adequate fluency. The committee reported these concerns to the faculty, and, as a group, we decided our focus for the year would be on improving fluency in class, while encouraging our students to read more at home.

Fluency and independent reading

We knew that reading fluency—the ability to read accurately, smoothly, quickly, and with the sound of language—contributes to the understanding of text (Rasinski & Padak, 1996) and correspondingly we found that fluent readers could read passages on standardized tests better than those who were disfluent. To help our students acquire reading fluency, we began using repeated reading activities in our classrooms. In these activities, students read and reread passages several times until they were able to do so fluently. We brought Tim Rasinski, a professor from Kent State University, to our school to show us ways to build fluency and to develop better home-school relationships.

Though such activities are useful for improving reading, we still had no doubt that the best thing we could do to improve our students' reading would be to encourage independent reading. We recognized that the students who practiced reading at home were better readers. In one landmark study of student use of time outside of school, it was found that "reading books was the best predictor of several measures of reading achievement, including gains in reading achievement between second and fifth grade" (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988, p. 285).

However, we feared that more reading alone might not be enough. We wanted to encourage more reading, but we also hoped to instigate greater parent involvement. Results from the recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate that students who were regularly involved with their families in literacy-related activities had higher levels of reading achievement than students who were not. Similarly, an international study of reading instruction found that the degree of parental cooperation was the most potent of 56 significant characteristics of schools most successful in teaching reading (Postlethwaite & Ross, 1992).

We wanted to implement a reading incentive program at El Sierra School that would cause our students to increase their reading time at home. With the help of teachers and other staff members, we set

our goal for a combined total of one million minutes. We knew this type of project had been successful in other districts (Rasinski & Padak, 1996), but a million minutes.... It made our minds reel. El Sierra enrolled only about 410 students (K–6) at the time, so our million-minute goal would mean nearly 1 hour per week of out-of-school reading for every single child for an entire school year! National statistics suggest that students don't read very much when they are away from school and homework. According to the NAEP, 60% of elementary students report that they do not read at home daily, and remarkably, 19% say that they read at home only once per month, once per year, or that they never read a book, newspaper, or magazine when they are away from schoolwork (Campbell, Reese, O'Sullivan, & Dossey, 1996). The statistics also reveal no apparent increase in such reading during the past decade. How could we do it?

Our incentive project begins

We formed a new committee of interested teachers to oversee the effort. This group included all of the SIP committee members, other classroom teachers, and the learning resource center (LRC) teacher. We set to work planning the details. The state of Illinois sponsors an annual family reading night, and we decided to use this as the kickoff for our own long-term effort. We went with the state's family reading night motif, which was "aliens reading with their families," and created our own "Reading Is Out of This World" theme. Colorful signs were posted around the school, and the marquee in front of the school informed the community that "the aliens were coming."

We kicked off the Million Minute Reading Program with an assembly in November. The principal and teachers dressed as aliens complete with green paint, costumes, and extra eyes. At the assembly, the principal read *How Much Is a Million* by David Schwartz to emphasize the idea that we together, as a school community, were going to strive to read for one million minutes by June. At the assembly, the staff, including the principal, teachers, aides, and secretary, presented a play about storybook characters to the students. No one left the assembly that day with any doubts about what our goal was, and we sent a letter home to all parents making sure that they knew, too. That letter explained the purpose of the program, how it would work, and most important, how they could help.

Keeping track of our minutes was an important task, and the committee tried to make it as easy and time efficient as possible. Students were directed to record their minutes of daily reading on a logsheet. Parents signed each entry; when 100 minutes were completed the sheet was turned into the classroom teacher. Teachers kept track of their students' and their own reading on a spreadsheet program that was installed in each classroom computer. Teachers entered the data into their computers as students brought in their logsheets. The LRC housed Control Cen-

tral, the computer that tracked the minutes of reading for the entire school. Teachers entered their classroom data weekly into this computer. Control Central also included a spreadsheet that recorded the minutes of reading for special staff including the principal, secretary, aides, librarian, speech teacher, reading teacher, and special education teacher. These spreadsheet totals were combined weekly. Not all teachers felt confident in using a spreadsheet computer program, so computer-literate teachers offered short workshops on spreadsheets. By the end of the year, most teachers felt confident using the computer in this novel way.

In order for everyone to know how many minutes we read monthly, a rocket chart was made by several sixth graders and displayed in our LRC. This chart was a visible record of our number of minutes read and displayed our movement to our goal.

Communication and enthusiasm are keys

The El Sierra faculty learned a lot about what it takes to sustain such a long-term reading incentive program. This was the first time in its 25-year history that our school had attempted a yearlong incentive program, so regular communication was very important. Memos from the school reading specialist were used to let everyone know about activities, prizes, and the school's progress. Newsletters were sent to parents to keep them informed of our progress toward the goal of one million minutes.

To generate interest at the beginning of the program, the school commissioned a mural depicting an astronaut in outer space to be painted on the gym wall by a local artist. For every 100 minutes that a student read, another star was placed on the mural. Stars—symbols of our success—were not linked to individual children but instead were viewed as a community accomplishment. However, we did include both group and individual recognition. Prize incentives were given monthly and in 500-minute increments to help sustain interest. Students who read a lot received extra time in the school district's portable planetarium, earned student-made reading buttons, had their pictures taken with the mural astronaut, or received free books that were donated by the Parent Teacher Association.

We decided that if we met the challenge, and one million minutes of reading was accomplished, an all-school parade would allow us to celebrate our success. The cost of the entire incentive program was minimal, less than US$800, and that included paper for letters and logsheets, film and processing, artist costs, and incentives.

To be honest, not all teachers were enthusiastic about the program at the beginning. But as they saw the excitement of the other teachers, students, and parents, the enthusiasm became contagious. As one teacher said, "The only things that were required of me were my own contributions of reading minutes and a dose of enthusiasm." Support from the school

principal was essential too. At El Sierra, the principal was very supportive and gave that extra push when needed. When a principal shows real interest in student reading, many teachers find it easier to get involved. Additionally, the school reading specialist took the lead in making sure the program ran smoothly by solving problems and nagging or cheering people on as needed. The committee members worked well together and met regularly to make decisions regarding any changes in the program.

Even in a school like El Sierra, not all parents can or will be able to help their children in this way. Recognizing this, and to encourage *all* students to take part, the reading specialist supervised a "Buddy Reading Program" twice a week during afternoon recess. During this time, fifth and sixth graders read with those first and second graders who were not reading much at home. The minutes read with their buddies were recorded on the logsheets.

Despite all of our efforts, by March student interest had begun to cool. The committee met and decided to reignite enthusiasm by holding weekly prize drawings. Students would receive a raffle ticket for every 100 minutes read. On Fridays, tickets were drawn for various prizes including tickets to sporting events, gift certificates, books, shirts, shorts, posters, stuffed animals, and other items. These prizes were the result of the efforts of a wonderful parent volunteer who telephoned area businesses asking for merchandise donations for our million-minute drawings.

The goal is accomplished

By the first week in May, we had accomplished our goal of reading one million minutes. In June, we had an all-school parade celebrating this wonderful accomplishment. Students and staff dressed up as literary characters. Sixth graders made banners announcing how many minutes each classroom read. Students wrote letters to local celebrities inviting them to join in our reading parade. Our local mayor and school superintendent led the parade with the top readers in each class transported by a Downers Grove fire truck. A local newspaper took pictures and reported on the school's progress. After the parade, the PTA provided lunch for all students and held a celebration carnival in honor of this notable achievement.

Our goal of reading one million minutes that school year was reached, and some of our reading test scores improved. Parents saw improvement in their children's reading skills and attitudes. One parent of a struggling reader could not believe that her son would come home from school, set the oven timer, and read for an hour. She said that she had not been able to persuade him to read that much since he started school. Another family postponed their vacation until after our parade.

We assessed this reading incentive program with a survey of the thoughts, feelings, and reactions of the students, parents, and teachers. Of the 257 students who responded to the survey (a 63% response rate), 72% indicated that they had read more this year than ever before and

were now more interested in reading. Sixty-two percent of these students said that they talked about books more, and 80% said that they were now reading more kinds of books than previously. A third grader remarked that she "liked the program because it helped me get into the habit of reading every night." The students believed that not only were they reading more, but that their reading skills had improved as a result. About 63% of these students thought that their vocabulary, fluency, and decoding skills had gotten better because of the increased reading. A sixth grader noted that he "learned more words than ever before."

Importantly, parents agreed with their children about the value of this incentive program. Of the 109 parents who responded to the survey, 89% believed that their children read more this year than ever before, and 77% believed that their child was more interested in books. Eighty-six percent said that their child had read a wider variety of books than before, and 72% said that their child talked more about books. Everyone agreed that the students had made a serious and concerted effort to increase their amount of reading this year. A parent wrote, "My children, a first and fourth grader, read more this year than ever before. Their interest in books was greater as was the variety of books they chose. They read more challenging books and were eager to discuss the stories and authors who wrote them. They became so well versed in a topic that I felt I was actually learning from them. Please continue this program so more children can benefit from it."

Teachers were just as enthusiastic. They, like the students and parents, thought the program had increased the amount of at-home reading done by El Sierra students. They also saw an increase in the types of books read by their students. Eighty percent of the teachers said that their students had more interest in reading, and 60% thought that their students' fluency had improved as a result. One teacher stated that she liked how the program "got the children and their families into a routine of reading...it was a great way for parents to get involved with their children's reading."

A recurring comment throughout the three sets of surveys (teachers, parents, students) referred to the sense of community that this program had inspired. One fifth-grade student wrote that "everyone at school had the same goal and we were doing it together." Not surprisingly, given this degree of success, the vast majority of those who responded to the surveys expressed their hope for the future of reading incentive programs at El Sierra School. Accordingly, teachers at El Sierra are continuing our year-old tradition of a reading incentive program for the 1997–98 school year, and they have even begun planning for a third year. It's a lot of work, but it is worth it.

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Identifying and supporting low-literate parents

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Johnny, a second grader, is in tears. This is the day that everyone in the class has been looking forward to. This is the day of the big field trip. Everyone has turned in signed permission slips except poor Johnny. Once again, Johnny's mom did not respond to the note sent home. Johnny's teacher shakes her head and wonders why some parents aren't responsible enough to take more of an interest in their children.

This supposed lack of parental interest may seem all too common in the everyday classroom. Some classroom teachers do not realize the effect adult illiteracy has on their classrooms. Teachers need to realize that this problem influences the learning of their students (Denner & Farris, 1991). Furthermore, "children who live in homes with parents who don't have a high school diploma and those from economically deprived homes are five to six times more likely to drop out of school later in life" (Brizius & Foster, 1993, p. 70). As classroom teachers we need to break the cycle and encourage participation in meaningful reading for both parents and children.

If teachers are aware that adult illiteracy has an impact on their classrooms, they are more able to identify parents who may have difficulty reading. They are also more able to integrate methods to assist these parents and their children. "Teacher-parent interactions require that the teacher be sensitive, understanding, and responsive to the needs not only of the children but of the parents as well" (Denner & Farris, 1991, p. 65).

Identifying low-literate parents

Teachers must take on the task of being on the lookout for some sign of adult

illiteracy among the parents of students in the class. A teacher might recognize some of the following possible indicators of low-literate parents:

- Parents appear to lack interest in child's progress (e.g., no response to report cards, obvious lack of guidance on homework, and lack of attendance at conferences or school functions).
- Special-activity permission slips are not returned (e.g., field trip, open house, and conferences).
- Defensive behaviors relating to school activities are exhibited (e.g., overt criticism of school policies and hostility to recommendations about how to improve child's academic and behavioral performance).
- Frequent calls are made by the parent to the school office questioning the school schedule (e.g., early dismissal, vacation, and holidays).
- Parents exhibit inappropriate responses to written communication (e.g., signing on incorrect line and providing incorrect information).
- The teacher or school never sees written correspondence from the parent.
- The student might mention to the teacher that the parent is not a good reader.
- Lack of proper supplies and reading materials in the home (e.g., paper, pencils, crayons, books, magazines, newspapers) is obvious to the teacher when the quality of homework is seen. It is often a good indication that reading and writing are not a priority in the house when a child does not have the proper supplies at home.

What next?

When a parent is suspected of having difficulty in literacy, several things must be taken into account. First, the teacher must decide whether to talk with the parent and offer help and support. If the teacher does decide to talk with the parent, s/he may become very defensive and deny that there is a problem.

On the other hand, once the subject is brought up, the parent may be relieved to know that someone is concerned and willing to help. Regardless, the teacher must always respect the feelings of that parent and try to foster a sense of trust. Even if the teacher decides not to discuss the possibility of the parent's illiteracy, there are several ways to assist parents, and in turn help students, to become functional readers.

Ways to support low-literate parents

Hold parent sessions. In order not to single out illiterate parents, the classroom teacher needs to schedule a parent meeting that focuses on ways to nurture literacy and to promote its value. The teacher should hold enjoyable parent sessions so the parents are willing to return again and again. In addition, these sessions should be held at the convenience of the parents, not the teachers. If possible, the school should provide free babysitting and transportation. Refreshments at the sessions provide a more relaxing atmosphere.

Make tapes to go along with children's books. Books, tapes, and tape players can be sent home with students. The teacher can send home good children's literature read by volunteers, the principal, the janitors, and other school personnel. Class-made language experience books with their recordings can be sent home. The focus is then on the child reading the book to the parent instead of the parent reading the book to the child. This takes the pressure off the parent.

Use simple or alternative means of communication with parents. The teacher may want to call parents and ask them to come in and sign important papers, forms, etc., instead of sending such documents home to be signed.

Davis and Diaz (1994, p. 322) suggest replacing difficult terms with more familiar words (see Figure).

Schedule home visits. Many times low-literate parents may be intimidated by the school environment. The teacher can model appropriate literacy activities with the child and the family in the familiar surroundings of the family's own home. The teacher can take along books, examples of how to use environmental print, paper, pencils, small chalkboards, and other items to encourage reading and writing.

Provide a lending library for parents. Teachers can collect copies of children's favorite books and offer them for parents to take home. Videos of children's literature can also be available through this library. A classroom-based lending library may provide convenience and a less threatening atmosphere than the public library.

Send home magazine packs. Recycle old magazines; send them home to parents. The teacher can provide for a variety of interest and age levels so that each family member has a magazine. The idea is to acclimate the family to literature and to provide conversation starters. This may foster a greater appreciation of the written word.

Send home copies of familiar nursery rhymes and songs (Rosow, 1991). Parents may recognize these texts and put words to print. Thus parents and children can get meaning from print as they recite or sing familiar texts.

Replacing difficult words with familiar ones

Terms that may be difficult	Possible replacement
Child care provided	Do you need a babysitter?
Transportation requested	Do you need a ride?
2:00 dismissal	Students go home at 2:00
Spring recess	No school
Assessment week	Testing this week
Registration	Sign up for
Vision screening	Eye test
Remediation needed in	Needs extra help in
Occupation	Job

Make the parent aware of community programs. Share information about programs offered to encourage literacy development. Libraries, workplaces, community colleges, and local universities may have some community programs worth sharing.

Suggest that your district offer a "homework telephone hot line" for parents and students. Many school districts are adopting a homework hot line that provides an opportunity for parents and students to get information about school assignments, upcoming school events, school-related schedule changes, and the daily cafeteria menu. If the homework hot line is not available, homework assignments and other messages can be taped and sent home.

Conclusion

Does Johnny's mom really not care about his education, or is it that she does not have the literacy skills to take a more active role in Johnny's school activities? Often what appears to be an uninterested parent may indeed be a low-literate parent who is unable to understand or respond to school correspondence.

As teachers, we must be aware of this possibility and be ready to assist low-literate parents and their children. "The best way to get a student involved in literacy is to get the parent involved in their own literacy. Parents, as a child's first teacher, are uniquely qualified to pass on the richness of a literacy legacy through a shared literacy experience" (Nuckolls, 1991, p. 45).

Teachers who become frustrated with "unresponsible" parents should keep in mind that there may be more to the child's home environment than they might think. Even though the teacher may not be sure about the parent's level of literacy, our suggestions and other ideas developed by caring and informed teachers may be beneficial to all children and families. Helping parents help themselves and their children will result in a more relaxing and effective learning environment for all. The real winner is the future of our society—the children.

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Latinos/as and families: Books to enhance reading togetherness

Isabel Schon

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Latino readers, like readers everywhere, need books that enrich their lives as individual human beings, develop insights into and understandings of their own lives and the realities of the world around them, help them appreciate the greatness of their cultural heritage, and foster an interest in reading as a lifelong activity. These goals are difficult to attain without the support and encouragement of a family member who knows and appreciates the joys of reading.

Regrettably, many Latino/a young readers and their parents are, understandably, turned off from the pleasures of reading by the contrived stories and novels that present superficial, artsy-craftsy views of Latino people and cultures. These books portray Latino people from a very narrow perspective. The following, however, are noteworthy fiction and nonfiction books that present Latino children or adolescents and their families experiencing life, celebrating special occasions, or dealing with difficult situations. These books are appropriate for non-Latino young readers as well to help them break down stereotypes, introduce them to Latino culture, and reflect on universals that characterize human nature. For the convenience of the selector, tentative grade levels are assigned to each book.

For the young

Brenner, Barbara. *Rosa & Marco and the Three Wishes*. Ill. M. Halsey. New York: Bradbury Press. 1992. 30 pp. ISBN 0-02712315-4. US$11.95. Grades 1–3.

Rosa and her brother Marco are fishing and getting hungrier and hungrier. Marco finally catches a fish, but then lets him go because it will give them three wishes. They spend their three wishes in a comical fashion trying to get a taco off Marco's nose. The children's names and the taco with hot sauce add a Latino/Mexican touch to this simple story with softly colored illustrations.

Brusca, Maria Cristina. *On the Pampas*. Ill. by the author. New York: Henry Holt. 1991. 32 pp. ISBN 0-8050-1548-5. US$14.95. Grades 2–4.

The author recounts a fun-filled summer as a little girl in her grandparents' *estancia* (ranch) on the pampas of Argentina. Charming watercolor illustrations and an animated text depict the excitement of life on the ranch which includes caring for horses, working with cattle, enjoying big family dinners, spending time with gauchos, looking for *ñandú* eggs, learning to dance the *zamba*, and looking forward to next summer on the pampas.

Castañeda, Omar S. *Abuela's Weave*. Ill. E.O. Sanchez. New York: Lee & Low Books. 1993. 32 pp. ISBN 1-880000-00-8. US$14.95. Grades 2–4.

The sights, people, and culture of rural Guatemala are beautifully portrayed in this exquisitely illustrated book about Esperanza and her loving grandmother, who weave and sell traditional woven articles. The best parts are the bright, rich paintings conveying an intimate view of market day. Readers/listeners also will be touched by the loving relationship between Esperanza and her understanding grandmother. Despite the slight story, there is beauty and charm here.

Christopher, Matt. *Centerfield Ballhawk*. Ill. E. Beier. Boston: Little, Brown. 1992. 59 pp. ISBN 0-316-14079-1. US$11.95. Grades 2–4.

Nine-year-old José Mendez's greatest wish is to play baseball as well as his father, a former ballplayer. His efforts only get him in trouble, especially when he hits a ball through a neighbor's car window. When his 11-year-old sister shines as a player in her softball team, José is even more disappointed. Fortunately all ends well: José is an excellent fielder and his father listens to his feelings. The names allude to a Latino family; the B&W illustrations depict a middle-class Latino family. All children will be pleased—especially baseball fans.

Dorros, Arthur. *Abuela*. Ill. E. Kleven. New York: Dutton. 1991. 40 pp. ISBN 0-525-44750-4. US$13.95. Grades K–2.

Flying over Manhattan in her imagination, Rosalba and her *abuela* (grandmother) take an extraordinary trip on which they go to the park and feed the birds, wave to the people waiting for the bus, race with the sailboats, circle around the Statue of Liberty and have other wonderful adventures in beautiful multiethnic New York City. The vibrant illustrations, full of details and action, are a special joy. The easy-to-read and easy-to-understand text, interspersed with numerous words and phrases in Spanish, represents the language code switching that is used by many Latino children in the U.S. and, as such, it reflects a sociolinguistic reality.

Johnston, Tony. *Lorenzo, the Naughty Parrot*. Ill. L. Politi. San Diego: Harcourt Brace. 1992. 30 pp. ISBN 0-15-249350-6. US$14.95. Grades 2–4.

Lorenzo, the naughty parrot, is in the middle of all the action and excitement the happens to a family in Mexico. Politi's warm authentic artwork adds life to this fun-filled chapter book. A sprinkling of Spanish words amidst

popular Mexican customs further complement Lorenzo's life in a garden in Mexico.

Mora, Pat. *A Birthday Basket for Tia*. Ill. C. Lang. New York: Macmillan. 1992. 32 pp. ISBN 0-02-767400-2. US$13.95. Grades Preschool–2.

Cecilia prepares a surprise gift for her aunt's birthday in this warm and affectionate story. Bright watercolor illustrations add a definite Hispanic flavor to Cecilia's joyful activities.

Nodar, Carmen Santiago. *Abuelita's Paradise*. Ill. D. Paterson. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. 1992. 32 pp. ISBN 0-8075-0129-8. US$13.95. Grades K–3.

In a tender and loving manner, Marita reminisces about her grandmother, who recently died, and grandmother's life in beautiful, rural Puerto Rico. Lush illustrations of a little girl and her family enjoying life in a pastoral Puerto Rican setting and a sensitive, touching narrative with endearing Spanish words interspersed throughout will make this story a favorite of Puerto Rican families who long for abuelita's paradise.

Reiser, Lynn. *Margaret and Margarita/Margarita y Margaret*. Ill. by the author. New York: Greenwillow. 1993. 32 pp. ISBN 0-688-12239-6. US$14.00. Grades Preschool–1.

Margaret, who only speaks English, and Margarita, who only speaks Spanish, meet in the park and have fun playing and talking to each other in their own languages. In a clever intermingling of languages, readers/listeners will be able to join in the the girls' bilingual conversation. The simple illustrations of two girls and their mothers add a lighthearted touch to what otherwise could have been a dull English-as-a-second-language or Spanish-as-a-second-language lesson.

For the middle grades

Ancona, George. *Pablo Remembers: The Fiesta of the Day of the Dead*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard. 1993. 48 pp. ISBN 0-688-11249-8. US$15.00. Grades 3–5.

Pablo and his family are busy preparing for the three-day celebration *El Dia de los Muertos* (The Day of the Dead), when Pablo will especially honor the memory of his loving grandmother. Stunning photographs are a fine complement to this authentic description of this most unique Mexican holiday which coincides with Halloween in the United States. The author's note and glossary provide further information about the history and contemporary celebrations of the Day of the Dead in Mexico.

Baden, Robert. *And Sunday Makes Seven*. Ill. M. Edwards. Niles, IL: Albert Whitman. 1990. 36 pp. ISBN 0-8075-0356-8. US$12.95. Grades 3–6.

This traditional tale from Costa Rica has maintained its liveliness in this well-done English version. Children will sympathize with kind Carlos as he is re-

warded by 12 witches for adding to their song about the days of the week. Readers will also understand why Carlos's rich and greedy cousin Ricardo receives an unpleasant surprise. It is important to note that, to fully understand this tale, children must have a basic understanding of the Spanish language—especially the days of the week and numbers 1 to 7. The colorful illustrations portray rural Costa Rica.

Brimner, Larry Dane. *A Migrant Family*. Photos by the author. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner. 1992. 40 pp. ISBN 0-8225-2554-2. US$12.95. Grades 4–8.

Through Juan Medina, a 12-year-old boy and his family, readers are exposed to the life of migrant workers in southern California. In a forthright yet personal style, this photo essay describes their living conditions, where "houses are built of salvaged plywood. Orange or blue sheets of plastic make do for roofs. Trees and chaparral (shrubs and underbrush) shelter the crude shacks" and "these sites usually lack drinking water, electricity, and toilets." It tells about the hostility of local residents, the children's problems in school, and the backbreaking field labor, but also about helpful teachers. Joel, a migrant worker, honestly explains "that life in *el monte* is still better than what he had in Mexico. He can earn in one day in the U.S. what would have taken him months to earn in Mexico. And there is something more. 'Here,' he says 'I have hope—if not for me, then for my children.'" This is a candid overview of some of the many issues surrounding migrant workers, especially from Mexico and Latin America.

Crespo, George. *How the Sea Began*. Ill. by the author. New York: Clarion. 1993. 30 pp. ISBN 0-395-63033-9. US$14.95. Grades 2–5.

This lively retelling of a Taino myth shows how the ocean derived from a magical bow and arrow upon the death of a young hunter who used to provide for his village. The bold illustrations, painted in oils on rag paper, give the right Latin American/Caribbean ambiance and perfect touch to this beautiful myth about family love, death and eternal life.

Greenberg, Keith Elliot. *Out of the Gang*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner. 1992. 40 pp. ISBN 0-8225-2553-4. US$12.95. Grades 4–8.

Through Butch Young, a former gang member for the tough Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, and Gino Mercado, a sixth grader who has decided to stay out of gangs, young readers are exposed to the dangers, initiation rites, fights, drug deals and other aspects of gang life. B&W photographs of arrests, graffiti, and impoverished families and neighborhoods add a sense of realism to this concise, well-written journalistic report on the lifestyle and organization of gangs in major cities in the U.S.

Mikaelsen, Ben. *Sparrow Hawk Red*. New York: Hyperion. 1993. 185 pp. ISBN 1-56282-387-6. US$14.95. Grades 6–9.

Ricky, a 13-year-old Mexican-American son of a former U.S. drug enforcement agent, tries to avenge his mother's murder by going to Mexico to steal a high-tech radar plane from drug smugglers. A fast-action thriller with likable Mexican and Mexican-American characters, this novel will please adolescents. Ricky's heroic deeds and close calls make this an exciting novel. The only unfortunate aspect is that the author insists in calling Mexico's homeless and poor children *ratero*, which in Spanish means thief or petty thief and not "street rat," as he explains. Indigent children are a sad reality in Mexico; but calling them thieves is a gratuitous insult.

Soto, Gary. *Baseball in April and Other Stories*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace. 1990. 111 pp. ISBN 0-15-205720-X. US$14.95. Grades 5–9.

Here are 11 short stories that tell about the trials and tribulations of growing up. The author sensitively depicts the everyday worries and anxieties of Latino preteen boys and girls in Fresno, California, as they deal with lack of money, embarrassing moments at school, obstinate parents, and other difficult situations. Of special interest because of the universal themes are "Seventh Grade," "Mother and Daughter," and "La Bamba." All adolescents, not only Latinos, will empathize.

Soto, Gary. *Local News*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace. 1993. 148 pp. ISBN 0-15-248117-6. US$13.95. Grades 4–7.

These 13 short stories depict in Gary Soto's unmistakable easy-going style the everyday lives of Mexican-American children and their families in California's Central Valley. My favorites are "The Raiders Jacket," that tells about Lorena's feelings after misplacing Eddie's ("the handsomest seventh-grader" in her class) jacket, and "Nacho Loco," the fifth-grader, who decides not to eat meat for the welfare of his body and the planet as he protests: "'I ain't on welfare!'" A glossary of Spanish words and phrases may be useful to non-Spanish speakers.

Soto, Gary. *The Pool Party*. Ill. R. Casilla. New York: Delacorte. 1993. 104 pp. ISBN 0-385-30890-6. US$13.95. Grades 3–5.

Ten-year-old Rudy Herrera is excited about an invitation to a pool party given by Tiffany Perez, the richest and most popular girl in school. His family is eager to advise him about what to take, what to say, and how to behave. Drawings of Rudy with his family and friends preparing for the big event are a fine complement to this warm story about a hard-working Mexican-American family that enjoys working and living together. Some readers may object to the relaxed somewhat slow pace of the narrative, but it is indeed refreshing to read about a happy Mexican-American boy who has universal likes and dislikes and is not suffering extreme adversity or other tragic life circumstances.

Soto, Gary. *The Skirt*. Ill. E. Velasquez. New York: Delacorte. 1992. 74 pp. ISBN 0-385-30665-2. US$14.95. Grades 3–5.

Miata Ramirez, a fourth grader, is worried because she left her mother's *folklórico* skirt on the school bus and she needs to wear it in a dance performance. With help from her best friend, she finally gets it back and is relieved that she doesn't have to tell her parents. Miata's loving and supportive Mexican-American family are warmly depicted in this lighthearted story in which children do all the things children are not supposed to do, such as lock themselves out of their houses, climb trees, and play with matches. It is also wonderful to read about a Mexican-American family that enjoys its food, language, and background and is happy in its new home in southern California. In addition, Miata's verve will please all readers. The B&W illustrations perfectly capture the spirit and tone of the story.

Can we read you our story? The tale of a school-public library partnership

Marianne C. Saccardi

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"Can we read you our story so far?" Susan and Bess were hard at work on a story about a friendship gone sour, and they were anxious to share it with me. While I listened to the two girls, other children in this multiage group of 10-, 11-, and 12-year-olds were engaged in a variety of reading and writing activities. Some were writing in notebooks, others had begun drafts of pieces, still others were discussing a book they had just finished reading. Yet I also noted that for a few students in the room, time passed as slowly as the eve of a birthday. They wore paths to the pencil sharpener and writing supply shelves, they chatted, and they waited for the workshop to end.

Clearly, the momentum with which we had begun the year as a reading and writing community was, for these students, waning. Reading their stories to me or sitting in the author's chair to share them with the class were just not motivation enough for writing. They chose not to participate as authors in our regularly scheduled publishing parties, though they enjoyed the celebration and the refreshments that followed the readings. They read books, but sharing them with classmates did not always lead them to more reading.

I began to ask myself, as Calkins (1994) suggests, "How can I establish conditions within which my students [ALL of them] will want to write?" (p. 14). How can I help my students believe that each of them has something important and powerful to say, something so pressing that even though writing can be "hard and lonely and the words seldom just flow" (Zinsser, 1985, p. 6), they will stay with the blank page day after day until they have said it well? I looked closely at those students who were reading and writing with enthusiasm. What could they teach me that would help me with their more reluctant classmates? This article describes what I learned and the 3-month project we launched in response to that learn-

ing—a project that engaged not only the students in the class I was working with, but older and younger students in the school, too, and those beyond the school in our local community.

Some characteristics of ardent readers and writers

Although writing is an individual process, there were some similarities among the more avid readers and writers. All of them viewed themselves as authors who labored at their work in much the same way as the published writers whose work they relished reading. All of them had a sense of purpose. Susan and Bess were planning to turn their story into a book for the class library. Some students were writing stories and poems for the class literary magazine published at the end of the year. Still others practiced reading their favorite picture books to share with young students in the Lower School. In a word, they were reading and writing not only for themselves, but for an audience.

> [S]chool writing programs cannot merely consist of rhetorical dry runs and as-if experiences. Just as children learning their oral language cannot fully develop if they only pretend to talk with storekeepers, strangers, and new children at the park, so, too, young writers in school cannot grow without actually sharing their writing with many real audiences. Understanding this, wise teachers not only try to set up better writing situations but also work to make sure that students receive plenty of authentic, naturalistic feedback on their writing from a wide range of audiences inside and beyond the school. (Daniels, 1990, p. 120)

I began to consider whether reading and writing could spill over beyond our classroom walls and whether having a new audience in the "real world" would relieve me of the job of trying to "motivate" my students to write and result in their true involvement in writing (Calkins, 1994).

Launching a partnership

The children's room at the main branch of the Greenwich Public Library had long been a wonderful resource for us, and so I went to see two of the children's librarians, Jasmine Posey, head of the department, and Ann Yarmal, who ran a weekly after-school story hour. Together we worked out a plan that would enable all of the students at our school who wished to do so to share their reading and writing at the library. We agreed that for 2 months, students' writing would be displayed throughout the children's room. This would enable even our youngest writers to participate. In addition, on three consecutive Thursdays, our fourth- through ninth-grade students would run the regular after-school story hour for 5- to 10-year-olds. The students would read their own stories and poems, talk about their favorite books, and conclude the session with an art or drama activity.

Getting ready

The opportunity to present their work in a library program generated a considerable amount of energy among the students, and the next weeks were filled with preparations. Even those who had not completed a piece of writing in some time began to consider topics they wished to share with the children who would be coming to the library sessions. One decided to write an essay on preserving the environment. Several wrote poems. Others wrote fiction or personal narratives. They tried ideas out on each other, conferred with teachers, and continually revised their work, "chasing after words, trying to put the most beautiful words in the world down on paper" (Fletcher, 1993, p. 32). They met in groups to decide who would read their stories, who would prepare work for display, and who would do book talks. A few volunteers gathered in the art room to make a colorful banner to go with the stories that would be on display. Everyone started thinking and talking about books. What books did we enjoy as 5-year-olds and in the ensuing years? What books do we enjoy reading now? What authors serve as our mentors to make us better writers ourselves? Out of this book talk grew a typed, annotated list of our favorite books to be distributed at the story hour and handmade book jackets to display in the library's story room.

The library, too, joined in the preparations. The librarians cleared wall space for our story display. The student-run story hour was published in the library's monthly events bulletin. A special flyer was printed and distributed to all who came to the children's room in the weeks before the sessions were to start with a request that those who wished to participate register beforehand. In addition, announcements appeared in the local newspaper. The "real world" was taking our students seriously as readers and writers, and they came to believe that they had an expertise to share with others.

Parent participation

"You've written wonderful stories. Everyone is anxious to hear them. Speak in a loud voice and look up at the audience now and then. Show them you know they are there. And have fun!" Working with a parent who is a professional actor, the children were caught up in the last phase of their preparation—how to read their work effectively and confidently and have a good time doing it. Over and over again they practiced reading slowly and making eye contact with the audience. For self-conscious adolescents, this was, perhaps, one of the most valuable aspects of the project and a great confidence booster.

The three library sessions

Our 10-, 11-, and 12-year-olds ran the first story hour. Several students read their own stories. They were followed by others who each talked about a book they felt would be suitable for the children who attended the event. Among the picture books shared were old favorites such as

The Story About Ping (Flack & Wiese, 1933), and *Make Way for Ducklings* (McCloskey, 1976), and more recent works such as *V for Vanishing: An Alphabet of Endangered Animals* (Mullins, 1994), *Julius, the Baby of the World* (Henkes, 1990), *Strega Nona Meets Her Match* (dePaola, 1993), and *The Bremen Town Musicians* (Stevens, 1992). The students also talked about simple novels such as *Falcon's Egg* (Gray, 1995), *Scooter* (Williams, 1993), and *The Secret Elephant of Harlan Kooter* (Harvey, 1992). Then they helped their younger audience make book jackets of their own. Despite initial nervousness, the hour flew by.

The second week, our 13- and 14-year-olds planned a poetry hour. They read both their original poems and some favorites from *Sing a Song of Popcorn* (de Regniers, 1988). Choral readings of some of Paul Fleischman's (1988) poems in *Joyful Noise* were a big hit. The students then divided their listeners into groups and helped them act out familiar nursery rhymes. The session ended with participants drawing images from the poems they had heard.

Our final week, again hosted by 10-, 11-, and 12-year-olds, was a mixture of stories, poems, and more book talk. The children seemed most themselves when chatting about books. They were, in a sense, introducing old friends to the group. Their listeners especially enjoyed some of the books about animals like Jonathan London's (1994) *Condor's Egg* and Seymour Simon's (1991) *Big Cats*. Again, the audience divided into groups. This time each group wrote and illustrated its own story. What laughter we shared when we came back together and the groups presented their stories! Later, these stories were typed at our school and mailed to those participants who wished to have them.

Conclusions

Not everyone in the class became excited about or involved in the library-share project. Some reluctant readers and writers continued to avoid reading and writing whenever they could. Others decided to try writing a story to share but gave up midway, and settled for a quick or pat ending. We had the added difficulty of competing with after-school sports activities as well. Then there were the logistics of arranging for transportation to the library and pick-ups after each program ended.

Yet, despite the lack of total involvement and the special arrangements we had to make, we felt the time and effort we put into this project were well worth it. Certainly, having a "product" to display on the library walls or read to an audience was not our primary goal. We were far more interested in helping our students to become invested in their writing, to care enough to work hard at it, and to grow as authors with each new effort. And yet, what author does not yearn to publish? The library project gave our children the opportunity to be acknowledged by a wider audience. It gave them the chance to work with a professional to gain confidence in public speaking. It gave our older

children a chance to show how caring and sensitive they could be with their young audience. Most importantly, it gave all our students the opportunity to engage in genuine literacy acts that were authentic and meaningful (Routman, 1991).

But the gains went well beyond the classroom. The public librarians, newly aware of the importance of writing in the curriculum, put together a display of books on writing. They ordered some books from the list of favorites we had typed. And, best of all, we developed an even more supportive library-school relationship. Parents became more aware of what we were trying to accomplish in the classroom and joined us in encouraging their children to participate and in helping with transportation.

A poem about the death of a little girl written by a 9-year-old author; an essay on the misuse of natural resources; a review of a new TV sitcom; a talk about books in the car on the way home from a soccer game;...the reading and writing goes on...and on. Isn't that the best possible endorsement of our library-school project?

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International Reading Association parent booklets and brochures

The International Reading Association offers resources for parents and caregivers looking for information on ways to help their child develop the necessary literacy skills to succeed in school and in life. These publications also help teachers who are looking for ways to help their students' parents work with their children at home.

Parent booklets

The parent booklets available from IRA are as follows:

Beginning Literacy and Your Child: A Guide to Helping Your Baby or Preschooler Become a Reader

This booklet supports the belief that it's never too early to start a child on a literacy journey. Strategies are offered for talking to babies, demonstrating reading to babies, and for turning the home into a supportive literacy environment.

I Can Read and Write! How to Encourage Your School-Age Child's Literacy Development

This booklet suggests that parents read with their elementary-age child, allowing the child to participate in the reading. The booklet also shows how to make the home a reader-friendly environment, initiate writing activities with a child, and make family trips to the library.

"Books Are Cool!" Keeping Your Middle School Student Reading

This booklet offers strategies for parents with children who are going through a difficult time of personal, physical, and social growth. Strategies are offered for helping a child prioritize and find time to read, and for helping find appropriate reading materials.

Parents, Teens, and Reading: A Winning Combination

This booklet offers strategies for parents who must deal with older children whose time may be limited and who may not be as concerned about reading as they are about friends and their social lives. The booklet recommends that parents be creative and encourage their child that any reading is good reading, whether it be books, magazines, or Internet sites.

Parent brochures

The brochures available from IRA are as follows:

Get Ready to Read! Tips for Parents of Young Children

Explore the Playground of Books: Tips for Parents of Beginning Readers

Summer Reading Adventure! Tips for Parents of Young Readers

Making the Most of Television: Tips for Parents of Young Viewers

See the World on the Internet: Tips for Parents of Young Readers—and "Surfers"

Library Safari: Tips for Parents of Young Readers and Explorers

Make the Reading-Writing Connection: Tips for Parents of Young Learners

Understanding Your Child's Learning Differences

Single copies of parent brochures can be downloaded free for personal use through the IRA Web site (www.reading.org/publications/books/brochures.htm). Singles copies of brochures also are available by sending a request with a No. 10 self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road
PO Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714, USA

Single copies and bulk copies of parent booklets and bulk copies of brochures can be ordered through the IRA Online Bookstore (bookstore.reading.org) or by calling the IRA Order Department at 800-336-7323, ext. 266. Refer to the Online Bookstore or consult the Order Department for bulk pricing information.

Information on International Reading Association "Choices" booklists

Among the most popular features of the International Reading Association's print journals *The Reading Teacher* and the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* are the annual "Choices" booklists.

The Children's Choices project is cosponsored by the International Reading Association and the Children's Book Council, and the booklist appears each year in the October issue of *The Reading Teacher*. The list includes brief reviews of approximately 100 titles, each of which has been recommended by the children themselves. Each year 10,000 school children from different regions of the United States read and vote on the newly published children's books they like best. This list is designed for use not only by teachers, librarians, administrators, and booksellers, but also by parents, caregivers, and everyone who wishes to encourage young people to read for pleasure.

Each year the International Reading Association's Teachers' Choices project identifies approximately 30 outstanding U.S. trade books for children and adolescents that teachers find to be exceptional in curriculum use. Parents also will find books from the Teachers' Choices list good for reading aloud at home.

The annotated booklist, which appears in the November issue of *The Reading Teacher*, is accomplished though a national field test of more than 300 newly published books submitted by U.S. trade book publishers.

Young Adults' Choices, a list that appears in the November issue of the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, provides descriptions of approximately 30 books selected by teams of teenage reviewers from five different regions of the United States. The goals of the project are to encourage young people to read; to make teens, teachers, librarians, and parents aware of new literature for young adults; and to provide middle school and secondary school students with an opportunity to voice their opinions about books being written for them.

The Choices booklists are available in PDF format through the International Reading Association Web site (www.reading.org/choices). Copies also may be requested by sending a 9" × 12" self-addressed stamped envelope plus $1.00 postage and handling for each list to International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139.

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The America Reads Challenge

The America Reads Challenge is a nonpartisan effort directed to the goal that every child in the United States be able to read well and independently by the end of third grade.

As a member of U.S. President Bill Clinton's Coalition for the America Reads Challenge, the International Reading Association is encouraging its members and all educators to make a difference to children who are beginning readers.

Effective tutors must have materials to refer to as they embark on the adventure of mentoring. The International Reading Association has more than 100 books in print to support the teaching of reading and writing, and a number of these titles relate specifically to tutoring children, teaching students who have difficulties with reading, and developing effective reading practices at school and in the home. The IRA books that relate most directly to America Reads are as follows:

The Reading Team: A Handbook for Volunteer Tutors K-3

Lesley Mandel Morrow, Barbara J. Walker, 1997

Volunteer tutors will find this handbook to be an essential source of hands-on information about the tutoring process. It shows tutors how to motivate students to learn to read, how to structure and implement tutoring sessions, and how to record progress and evaluate both students and themselves.

Tips for the Reading Team: Strategies for Tutors

Barbara J. Walker, Lesley Mandel Morrow, 1998

This book puts teaching ideas right where tutors need them. From the International Reading Association's journal *The Reading Teacher*, the activities and suggestions included in this book are classroom tested. Teachers and tutors will find specific instructions for each strategy, and illustrations throughout the book indicate in what part of the tutoring session each strategy is most helpful.

Training the Reading Team: A Guide for Supervisors of a Volunteer Tutoring Program

Barbara J. Walker, Ronald Scherry, Lesley Mandel Morrow, 1999

This companion to *The Reading Team* guides supervisors of a volunteer reading program through each step of tutor training. Based on a successful model developed by one of the authors, the book provides easy-to-reproduce overheads, handouts, a script of activities for tutors in

training sessions, and sample forms and letters to help implement and evaluate the tutoring program.

So...What's a Tutor to Do?

Cathy M. Roller, 1998

This book provides specific suggestions and strategies for structuring each segment of the tutoring session. The author outlines research in reading and writing development as a basis for the tutoring session. Her concise description of the tutoring session and the principles of good tutoring will guide even the most inexperienced volunteer. A section at the end of each chapter titled "For the Supervisor" explains how trainers best can teach tutors to use the strategies.

The Volunteer Tutor's Toolbox

Beth Ann Herrmann, Editor, 1994

Whether you are a volunteer in a community literacy program, a one-on-one tutor, or a parent who wants to help in the classroom, this book will show you how to work with individual students to strengthen their reading abilities.

To purchase these and other IRA titles, visit IRA's Online Bookstore (bookstore.reading.org) or call 800-336-7323, ext. 266.

For a catalog of IRA publications, e-mail marketing@reading.org or call 800-336-7323, ext. 283.

Book Adventure

Book Adventure (www.bookadventure.org) is a free online program developed by the Sylvan Learning Foundation with the goal of motivating students to achieve reading success with the help of interactive technology. The program lets students select the books they want to read, a method that has proven effective in promoting independent, versatile readers. The site has three resource sections: Parents Place, Teachers Lounge, and Kids Zone. Each section offers links to literacy trends, statistics, motivational tips, and educational tools. Students can log on to the site anywhere—at home, at school, or at the library—at any time, and they can create customized booklists from more than 3,000 recommended titles.

Students go off-line to read the books on their lists, then return to Book Adventure where they earn points by answering questions on a quiz. They also receive awards, prizes, and incentives for their reading success. The program uses computer technology to lead students back to the library and to encourage them to read longer, more frequently, and with greater comprehension.

The program includes a Book Adventure School Starter Kit, which includes a comprehensive user guide, an activity guide, a booklist, in-class posters, and a wall chart. The kit also helps teachers use Book Adventure's built-in management tools to track and measure students' independent reading progress. Book Adventure generates individual and class reports that allow parents and teachers to gauge children's understanding and share in their accomplishments.

Along with other leading literacy and educational organizations, the International Reading Association has provided guidance for the Book Adventure initiative and is a member of the program's Educational Advisory Committee.

Television series for beginning readers

Between the Lions

Between the Lions is a children's television series on PBS (public television in the United States) that combines innovative puppetry, animation, live action, and music to transform the sometimes confusing process of learning to read into an entertaining adventure for children ages 4 to 7 and their families.

Between the Lions is based on a comprehensive literacy curriculum that follows a "whole-part-whole" approach recommended by many reading experts. The curriculum emphasizes the pleasures and the value of reading, as well as the skills needed for learning how to read. The "whole" is provided by a read-aloud story, poem, or song, while a series of "parts" focuses on specific phonics skills.

The program, produced by WGBH Boston and Sirius Thinking, Ltd., is named for a family of lions who run a library like no other on earth. The doors "between the lions" swing open to reveal a magical place where characters pop off the pages of books, vowels sing, and words take on a life of their own.

The International Reading Association is a founding partner of *Between the Lions* and has helped introduce this series to families, literacy professionals, educators, and librarians.

Reading Rainbow

Reading Rainbow is the critically acclaimed half-hour PBS series that turns children on to terrific books. The series is based on the premise that the optimum time for learning to read, wanting to read, and adopting positive reading habits is before a child reaches middle school. *Reading Rainbow*, targeted to children ages 4 to 8, is broadcast by 95% of all U.S. public television stations. Librarians and booksellers report that books featured on episodes quickly become classics in children's personal libraries, and that children frequently request *Reading Rainbow* books by title and sometimes by author.

Reading Rainbow's magazine-style format features on-location, real-life settings—from an erupting volcano in Hawaii to the lights of Broadway. Programs also include colorful animation, music videos,

and singing and dancing. Popular celebrities narrate the program's feature book, while captivating illustrations appear on-screen. "Kid-on-the-street" interviews allow real kids to talk about issues in each episode. Children are introduced to interesting new people and places while exploring important social and cultural issues.

The *Reading Rainbow* Web site (gpn.unl.edu/rainbow) features many pages for librarians, parents, teachers, and children. Also on the Web site are descriptions of all *Reading Rainbow* videos and feature books, review booklists, and the *Reading Rainbow* U.S. broadcast schedule.

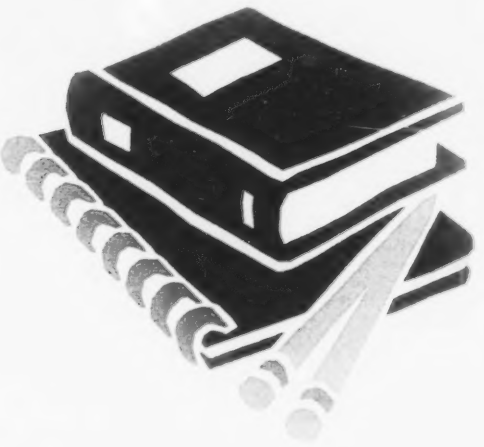
Most educators recognize the importance of home-school connections, especially for the development of engaged and enthusiastic readers. When the home is involved, both reading achievement and children's love for reading increase. Moreover, when successful home-school connections are made and maintained, parents and teachers come to a greater appreciation and understanding of the role of the other. Making a home-school reading connection is a win-win-win situation—for readers, for parents and other family members, and for teachers.

Motivating Recreational Reading and Promoting Home-School Connections: Strategies From The Reading Teacher presents the "best of the best" classroom-tested ideas and approaches for increasing student motivation for reading and for developing and maintaining home involvement in reading. The articles in this volume have been drawn from the Teaching Reading department of *The Reading Teacher* from 1993–1999; this section of the journal is devoted to practical reading instruction strategies for classrooms, reading clinics, and homes. The articles have been compiled by Timothy Rasinski and Nancy Padak, editors of *The Reading Teacher* from 1993–1999, and their team of associate editors.

The ideas and strategies offered in *Motivating Recreational Reading and Promoting Home-School Connections* offer ways to make reading motivation and home involvement an integral part of your classroom reading program.

Other books in the Teaching Reading Collection

- **Teaching Word Recognition, Spelling, and Vocabulary:** Strategies From *The Reading Teacher*
- **Developing Reading-Writing Connections:** Strategies From *The Reading Teacher*
- **Teaching Comprehension and Exploring Multiple Literacies:** Strategies From *The Reading Teacher*



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